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No. 23

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY REVIEW



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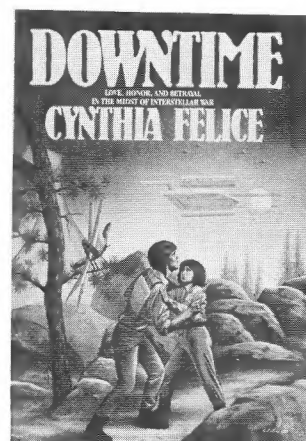


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# THRUST

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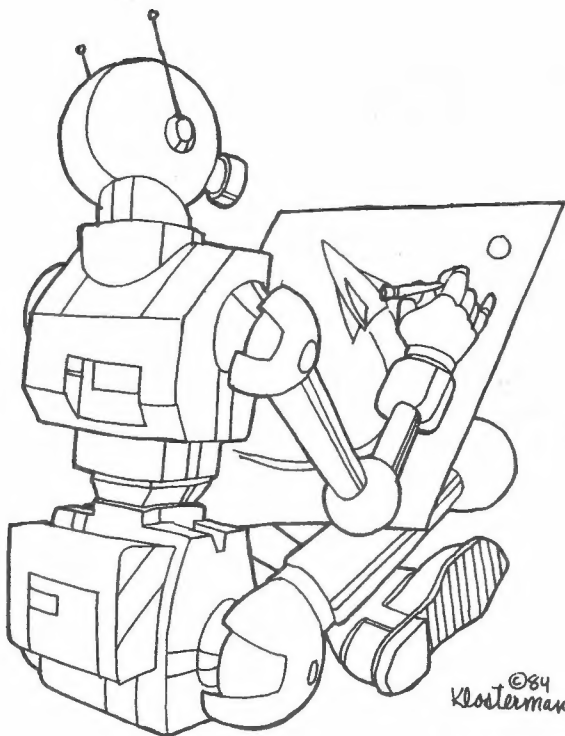
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# IMPULSE

## editorial by Doug Fratz

Welcome to THRUST #23, another issue of the only SF and fantasy literary review magazine in history to be proud (instead of apologetic) of its two-issues-per-year publication schedule.

**The Issue At Hand:** I believe I may have set a new record this issue for squeezing the most features into a single 36-page issue. (I find it hard to believe that I used to publish issues as large as 56 pages--how did I ever do it? I must have been younger then...) This issue features three of our regular columnists, two interviews, one author profile, and the first in a new series of articles, as well as our usual book reviews and letters.

Our three columnists this issue are Michael Bishop, Darrell Schweitzer and your humble editor himself. Mike's column covers a "potpourri" of topics as diverse as the prospectus for his Nebula Award-winning novel, **No Enemy But Time**, and his personal reaction to the first U.S. untethered space walk. Mike's latest novel is **Ancient of Days** from Arbor House, and he has a collection of non-fiction, **Alien Graffiti**, which includes much work published here in THRUST, coming out soon from Mark V. Ziesing. Darrell continues to look at recent science fiction and fantasy flicks, and attempts to find some merit in this summer's crop of films. My column is a remnescent look at my only personal meeting with the late Theodore Sturgeon, a story which, I suppose, reveals more about me at that time than about Sturgeon, whom the field will sorely miss as both author and philosopher.

Our interviews this issue are with Ben Bova, renowned author, editor and space advocate, and Sharon Webb, one of the better SF authors to enter the field in recent years. We also have a profile of veteran author Jane Yolen, best known as an author of children's fantasy books, but whose reputation as a writer of adult fantasy continues to grow.

This issue also begins a series of articles on the theme of immortality by well-known author Marvin Kaye, whose books include **The Incredible Umbrella** and **The Amorous Wolf and Other Improbable Stories**, and, co-authored with Parke Godwin, **Wintermind** and **The Masters of Solitude**. This is the first article in what is planned to be a six-part series.

Our usually insightful book reviews and letters of

comment complete the issue. And speaking of our letters column, I've been getting far fewer letters of comment than I would like for the last few issues, and have therefore decided to offer further incentive for the letter hackers among THRUST's readership. Beginning this issue, readers who have a letter published in THRUST will receive a free copy of the issue. For subscribers, that translates into an extra issue added to the end of your subscription. (Actually, that has been my informal policy for many years, but this now makes it official.)

**Feduciary Follies:** I suppose one has to be a little crazy, or maybe just insanely dedicated, to be in the literary review magazine publishing business, be it in the science fiction field or elsewhere. In the past decade of publishing THRUST, I have seen literally dozens of very promising and/or ambitious magazines disappear after one or two issues (or announced but never appearing at all), and have even seen some top quality publications perish long before their time.

One magazine in this latter category was ALGOL, later retitled STARSHIP, published until recent years by Andy Porter, who now publishes SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE. I was distressed to learn from a recent issue of SFC that STARSHIP was losing money in later years, and still owes its printer nearly \$7000. I suppose I should consider myself lucky that I have been able (barely) to keep pumping money into THRUST over the years.

Although my businessman's instincts advise me to let Andy worry about problem and I'll worry about mine, I find that my dedication to the field is the stronger of the two instincts. So I am hereby urging THRUST's readers to both subscribe to SFC (see the advertisement on page 15 of this issue), which is a very professionally done monthly SF news magazine, and if you weren't an ALGOL/STARSHIP reader, ask for Andy's list of back issues still available for that incredibly impressive but now defunct magazine.

But please don't forget THRUST either. The truth is, I must take steps immediately to improve the magazine's cash-flow problems. There will therefore be important changes next year in the magazine's format, frequency and circulation. Nothing is final yet. The "publisher" and "editor" are going to have to work out a compromise scheme which benefits THRUST both financially and editorially. Wish me luck!

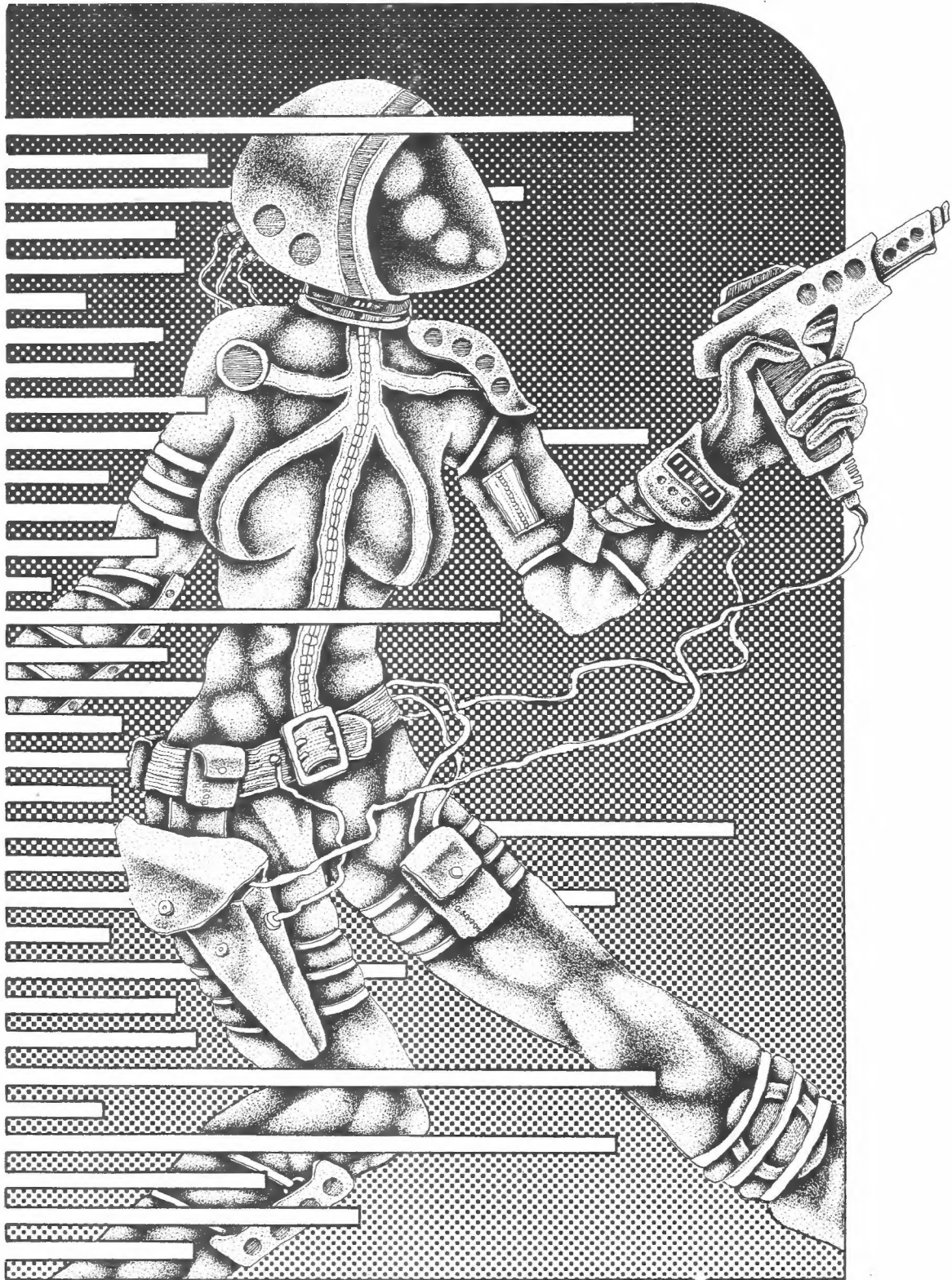
**In The Future:** We currently have interviews on hand of Walter Tevis, David Brin, Piers Anthony, Sterling Lanier and James P. Hogan, and I hope to include the second article in Marvin Kaye's series. Among THRUST's columnists, I hope that Ted White will report on his trip to Austrailia as Worldcon Fan Guest of Honor, and that either Ted or Dave Bischoff will report on their new SF magazine, STARDATE. And I plan to take a look at the success of the Campbell Awards in picking the field's best new writers.

- Doug Fratz



# MICHAEL BISHOP

## Pitching Pennies Against The Starboard Bulkhead



Usually when I turn my "Pitching Pennies" column for THRUST into Doug Fratz, it deals with a single topic. This time, however, I'm giving him—and you—a medley of pieces on three different and widely disparate topics.

Part one constitutes a review of two posthumously published Philip K. Dick novels, works of a realist stamp

## POTPOURRI

that he could not sell during his lifetime. The second section includes, in its entirety, the prospectus sent through my agent to Simon & Schuster when I was planning (and trying to sell) my novel **No Enemy But Time**. And part three is an essay on the first untethered spacewalk during an American space-shuttle mission. The Atlanta newspapers commissioned this piece on the (risky) assumption that a local sci-fi writer probably knew something about the implications of such a stunning feat. I didn't, but I wrote the essay, anyway, perhaps serendipitously stumbling into at least a little of the real significance of the event.

And perhaps not.

In any case, the continuing popularity of Philip K. Dick is a phenomenon worth examining, and it's my modest hope that some of THRUST's readers will find the prospectus for **No Enemy But Time** of interest, particularly since the novel itself differs markedly in several respects from the book prefigured by the unorthodox outline that convinced Timescape to go to contract with me.

What you have here, then, is a potpourri. Enjoy.

### Part One: Philip K. Dick

**In Milton Lumky Territory** by Philip K. Dick (Dragon Press, Pleasantville, New York: 1985. \$29.95).

**The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike** by Philip K. Dick (Mark V. Ziesing, Willimantic, Connecticut: 1984. \$19.50).

In March, 1982, just as he seemed to be earning some small recognition as a noteworthy American writer, Philip K. Dick died of a stroke in California. The film **Blade Runner**, loosely based on his 1968 SF novel **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sleep?**, was soon to open in the nation's theatres. Simon & Schuster's hardcover publication of his speculative mainstream work **The Transmigration of Timothy Archer**, an unorthodox novelization of Bishop James Pike's unorthodox career as a Christian leader, was scheduled for that May.

Dick must have felt that after nearly a quarter of century of toil--some of it rushed and unsatisfying, but much of it truly brilliant--he was about to make the critical and commercial breakthrough empowering him to write at his own pace. At last, he was able to approach the themes that had always obsessed him--the nature of reality, the quest for God, the spiritual poverty of so many American lives--with the care they deserve.

Alas, Dick's stroke, like the act of the jealous deity who so often seems to steer the plots of his phantasmagoric novels, kicked that poor human hope into the grave with Dick himself.

If anything good has come of Dick's death, it is that it has spurred the preparation and release of at least three of the ten or eleven unpublished contemporary novels that he wrote between 1948 and 1963. **Confessions of a Crap Artist**, published in 1975 by Dragon Press, the same specialty press responsible for this year's **In Milton Lumky Territory**, was the only one of these novels to surface during Dick's own lifetime, and it was only his notoriety as an innovative science fictioneer that secured its release then.

Today, though, others of these realist works are appearing, not simply because Dick took the 1963 Hugo Award for Best Novel with his masterly alternative history **The Man in the High Castle**, or even because such provocative SF titles as **Time Out of Joint**, **The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch**, **A Scanner Darkly**, and **VALIS** have challenged and enthralled so many readers. It is regrettably true that **In Milton Lumky Territory** and **The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike** would probably still be moldering in manuscript if Dick had never written science fiction, but both these early books have virtues that justify their publication without any reference to his unique credentials as an SF writer.

Dick wrote **In Milton Lumky Territory** in 1958, and most students of his work believe it the most successful of his

novel-length forays into realism. It has a structural and thematic unity absent in the more diffuse **The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike**, but a claustrophobic grimness of tone that makes even Arthur Miller's **Death of a Salesman** seem cheerful by contrast. In a futile attempt to mute this grimness, Dick prefaces the novel with the declaration that it is "actually a very funny book," but merely saying so fails to reassure any reader sensitive to the spiritual deadness of its characters.

The novel, set primarily in the American Northwest, focuses on Bruce Stevens, a young man who meets and then marries his former fifth-grade teacher, Susan Faine, a woman ten years older than he. Susan does not realize that Bruce was once her student until he shows her some old school photographs, by which time he is running the penny-ante typing service that Susan has started in partnership with an older woman whom the couple bullies into selling out. Most of the following narrative shows us Bruce's struggle to turn the shop into a profitable typewriter dealership as his marriage to the already twice-divorced Susan deteriorates.

The eponymous Milton Lumky is a traveling paper salesman. Fat, weary, and ill, he seeks to befriend the ambitious Stevens, only to wind up abandoned in a second-rate motel as his protegee decamps to Seattle to close a deal for fifty Japanese-made typewriters. Dick invests these squalid episodes with some heartfelt pathos, and it is his bemused compassion--rather than his humor--that keeps **In Milton Lumky Territory** from becoming a wholesale downer. Indeed, Dick is warning the American citizenry of the late 1950s of the deadly consequences of workaholic materialism.

Unfortunately, the American citizenry of the late 1950s never got to read Dick's warning.

**The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike**, written in 1960, provides another look at Dick in his (unpublished) role as naturalistic social critic. This novel lacks the concentrated focus of **Lumky**, but it is a good deal more fun to read. It examines the conflict between a real-estate man and a products designer in Marin County, California. The designer's clever but destructive variation on the infamous Piltdown hoax ensnares the real-estate man, along with most of the community in which they both live, and precipitates a cemetery search that ultimately reveals something bizarre about an isolated group of the county's early inhabitants.

Why weren't these queer but vigorous novels published during Dick's lifetime? **The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike** may have self-destructed in editorial offices because Dick insisted on sneaking a strong dollop of outlandish anthropological speculation into otherwise fairly conventional social satire. **In Milton Lumky Territory**, on the other hand, may have played all its cards against itself by so relentlessly detailing the dire effects of material ambition on the relations between management and labor, husbands and wives, parents and children.

And then, of course, there was Dick's reputation as a science fiction writer--next to the pornographer, the most disreputable of all American literary creatures--hanging over him like fumes from a half-hidden sewer.

Do these books warrant a reading today? I sincerely believe that they do, but must add that only aficionados of Dick's best SF novels are likely to find them as fascinating as I did. They are minor realist novels by a man whose failure to obtain publication for these and other works like them led him to produce some of the boldest and most original science fiction novels of the last thirty years. I wholeheartedly recommend them to Dick completists and to readers adventurous enough to disdain today's lightweight spy or horror novel for rarer, meatier fare.

### Part Two: Prospectus For A Novel Of Human Prehistory, or The Origins Of NO ENEMY BUT TIME

The book I have in mind involves a reconstruction of hominid life in Africa, either at Olduvai in present-day Tanzania or at Koobi Fora on Lake Turkana in present-day

Kenya, approximately two million years ago. The protagonist will be a modern man dropped back in time to this period by a combination of his own psychic susceptibility to temporal relocation and a government project's technological exploitation of this unusual trait.

The time-travel element will be down-played, however, in favor of a detailed portrait of a hominid community and the protagonist's necessary involvement with it. He must become a protohuman to survive; at the same time, in order to live with himself, he must find ways to validate his own modern identity even in this arduous and unlikely context. For him, what we ignorantly call prehistory has become vividly, and hazardingly, historical.

The book will deal with nurture and growth among the hominids (members of *Homo habilis*, whom many paleoanthropologists regard as the first decidedly human species of the three or four East African hominid families); the emergence of language; the division of tasks by sex, and an exception to this rigid female/male dichotomy in the person of a large but barren female whom the protagonist calls "Helen Habiline"; African ecology; and the time traveler's struggle to discover himself in the origins of his own species.

The only other contemporary novel that deals with this subject matter--or the only one that springs to mind--is William Golding's *The Inheritors*, which takes place 30,000-some-odd years ago rather than two million. Further, Golding's most basic concern is not hominids (little was known about these creatures when he was writing his book), but the ascendancy of Cro-Magnon Man over the doomed Neanderthals, whom he treats as incipiently telepathic.

One of the main assets of *No Enemy But Time*, as I envision it now, will be that it handles recent paleo-anthropological findings within the context of a psychologically realistic narrative. I intend to write both an ethnography of a species that no longer exists (honoring the known facts and extrapolating from them the outline of a workable hominid community) and a character study of the man who almost literally dreams himself among these habilines. And even though *No Enemy But Time* will be as far from melodrama as I can make it, the dangers posed by the harsh Pliocene ecology of East Africa should ensure that my book will lack neither suspense nor a kind of otherworldly "local color."

**The Protagonist:** At this stage, I am considering making my protagonist either an orphaned American chicano from southeastern Colorado or the son of a black serviceman and a young Spanish girl disfigured by a spidery birthmark whom the serviceman has met on his tour of duty at Moron Air Force Base near Seville, Spain. I propose either the one or the other because it is necessary that my main character be small and dark. These physical attributes will facilitate both his acceptance in the hominid band of two million years ago and his adjustment to the severe African heat of that same period. From whichever background he comes, my protagonist will grow up blessed (or afflicted) with vivid dreams in which the boredom and the terror of veldt life at that time roll through his sleeping mind, giving him a shadowy psychic umbilicus to that period. It is just this kind of dream, in fact, that makes him susceptible to the efforts of the secret government project to relocate human subjects in time by mechanical means and the subject's own suggestibility. In addition, the method of bringing about this temporal dislocation will suggest an ambiguity--similar to that used by Philip K. Dick in *Ubik* and other works and by Ursula K. Le Guin in *The Lathe of Heaven*--that the narrative may profitably exploit. Namely, has the protagonist really gone back in time, or is his total immersion in the past a protracted and convincing fever dream? In either case, the reality of his experiences among the hominids will occupy the heart of the narrative. Also, he will define himself for the reader, and for himself, by these experiences.

**Tentative Development:** These are points that I want to include in my story after the protagonist's "dropback" to prehistoric Africa:

1. A struggle for acceptance as a member of one specific band of *Homo habilis*. Because of his size (even if he is small by present-day standards), his relative hairlessness, his dress, and his sudden appearance near the habiline camp, the protagonist will have to insinuate himself among these protohumans gradually. To them, he is at first a monster of incomprehensible alienness, more terrifying in some ways than the giant hyenas and walrus-tusked elephants. He must prove that he belongs.

2. Socialization. Once tentatively accepted by the habilines, the time traveler will begin to distinguish them by identifying physical features. He will name these early tool-using creatures. This naming will raise the question of language as it exists among them. They will have a "call system" of some complexity, involving screeches, grunts, panting sounds, ululations, and even a few onomatopoeic words. The protagonist will attempt to learn what he can of their system, meanwhile teaching them a few words useful in referring to objects in their immediate environment.

3. Scavenging, hunting, foraging--all more or less parceled out by sex. These activities will constitute the background for many of the relationships that the protagonist develops with the habilines, especially the adult males in this band of approximately 18 to 25 individuals. Females, it appears, outnumbered males in these bands; and I have some work to do calculating possible ratios among males to females, adults to children, etc.

4. "Helen Habiline." A major protohuman character will be a large barren female who insists on hunting with the males (or scavenging with them, since that may have been the more usual food-accumulating method among males) rather than staying in or near camp grubbing and foraging. Because she has no children, and because her size allows her to enforce her desire in this, the males accept her on their hunting or scavenging forays. A complex relationship will develop between Helen and the protagonist, whose responses to her may vary from tenderness to disgust.

5. Infant and adult mortality. Death is an inescapable fact among the habilines. They fall to predation, accident, disease, and, sometimes, intramural scuffling. The protagonist will find that they have an effective remedy for wounds in the plant today called Olduvai--from which the Olduvai Gorge takes its name--or, in scientific circles, *Sansevieria*. An incident during a heavy thunderstorm will dramatize a glimmering of religious or mystical feeling among the habilines; this feeling will later be repeated in a different context when the group falls into ritualistic behavior to dispose of the corpse of a fellow.

6. Sexual behavior, including pair-bonding, the meaning and frequency of genital displays, and the likely nature of sexual receptivity among habiline females (i.e., whether it is tied to a cycle, as among most primates, or exists as a virtually day-to-day condition, as among contemporary human beings). These questions also relate to the enigma of habiline social relationships, among them the structure of the family, food-sharing behavior, and such things as grooming and kiss-feeding. The protagonist and Helen form a pair, but this will take time. I hope to show the poignancy of the relationship, which many readers may initially see as bestial and unnatural. I feel sure that I can handle these topics with a degree of delicacy as well as with realism.

7. Interspecies relationships. Conflicts among other bands of habilines, encounters with representatives of *Australopithecus africanus* and *A. robustus*, and maybe even run-ins with baboons or chimpanzees are highly likely occurrences in this narrative. Of course, the protagonist's presence in Helen's band will eventually prove a distinct advantage in these encounters, because of his size and his knowledge. But maybe not always.

8. One odd side-effect of the protagonist's dislocation in time is that he will stop dreaming prehistoric landscapes and begin to dream about the modern world. Contemporary languages will skate across these dreams: jukeboxes, automotive grills, comic-book characters, scenes



from television programs, and so on. There may be times when he finds himself living out hallucinatory modern scenarios within the realistic, dream-actualized state of his life among the habilines. These flashforwards will occur during periods of repose or respite, and they will be brief, like commercial spots projected to him across a thousand millennia. One consequence will be a greater sense of isolation, and a developing sense of irony, as he realizes that he is trying to shepherd the habilines towards the very future--his native "present"--from which he has so often removed himself in dreams.

9. Fire as both life-giver and destroyer on the plains around Olduvai. Writes Norman Myers in *The Long African Day*, "An African fire is a stirring sight... quick enough to clear and cleanse without destroying everything in sight. The animals step lightly through its path." Although the center of a burning tussock may soar to over 1,100 degrees Fahrenheit, Myers points out that the soil does not heat up much a fifth of an inch below the surface of the plain. One climactic scene will involve a fire on the veldt, set by a bolt of lightning, and this fire will cause an important ritual display among the habilines.

10. The sexual liaison between the protagonist and Helen will prove productive, in spite of her apparent barrenness with her own kind. Her pregnancy will come about because the protagonist, having developed a truly caring relationship with Helen, has taken the time to discover the obstacle to successful insemination posed by her anatomy--for, in contrast to that of most other habiline females, her body has evolved to accommodate face-to-face rather than belly-to-backside coitus. Ultimately, the protagonist will be present at the birth of their child, a birth that he must assist by means of a dangerous but unavoidable caesarean section.

11. The ending will turn on the protagonist's apparent death in our reality and the escape of his consciousness to the ancient African grasslands where Helen Habiline has borne their hybrid child. Someone in the here-and-now (I want to establish the year as the very one in which the manuscript is published in book form) will remark that the protagonist has died "alone, with no surviving family."

**Sources:** I have read a number of popular and scientific accounts of the recent discoveries--many of which are controversial and open to different readings--allowing us to imagine the development of these hominid species in East Africa. Before beginning to write *No Enemy But Time*, I hope to get some first-hand information from the paleo-anthropologists now involved in the search for our origins: Mary D. Leakey, Richard Leakey, Glynn Isaac, Donald Carl Johanson, Timothy White, Owen Lovejoy, and others. I especially need facts about the paleoecology of Olduvai and Koobi Fora.

**Final Comments:** Although I would like enough time to complete my research and to develop this material with the care that it deserves, the core of a potentially exciting novel resides within this prospectus. I believe the material has a potential audience wider than that associated with the typical SF novel, and I intend to handle it with that fact in mind. I submit my outline hoping that it will suggest the market possibilities of such a work and that any ensuing contract will reflect the determination of the publisher to reach that audience. I have given myself to this project as something inherently valuable, not merely as an avenue to another slam-bang SF thriller, and I ask the publisher's help in doing it right.\*

### Part Three: The Untethered Spacewalk

An image off the cover of a pulp magazine assaults the

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\*Not long after *No Enemy But Time* won the Nebula Award for Best Novel of 1982, Simon and Schuster terminated the Timescape program that, under David Hartwell's direction, had published the book.

eye. More accurately, it ignites the imagination. Its impact comes from one simple but exhilarating piece of knowledge. The bulky white figure hanging against the deep obsidian of outer space is a living man, not merely an ill-drawn effigy on flimsy newsprint.

What a kick to know that the legerdemain of applied technology has eased the ache of wistful teenage longing. Dreams do come true. In the immediate sense, of course, this one has come true courtesy of NASA. Gaudy little magazines with such promise-puffed names as *AMAZING*, *ASTOUNDING*, *FANTASTIC*, and *IF* have nothing to do with it. Scientists, not wool-gathering schoolboys and penny-a-word dream merchants, have done the real dog work that this past week enabled two of our astronauts to go backpacking about the heavens in their snow-white suits.

But in an oblique sense--in a moving, visionary sense--perhaps NASA should share the glory. Those space-walkers powering themselves back and forth in their Manned Maneuvering Units owe their occupations, and their joy in these wish-fulfilling jaunts outside the shuttle, to an army of disreputable dreamers--to an entire population of scoffed-at fantasizers, living and dead, who believed with preposterous conviction that the impossible could happen.

These dreamers believed that rocket-propelled vehicles could lift themselves out of Earth's gravity well. That sophisticated mechanical payloads and human passengers could ride these rockets into orbit. That fragile-looking but resilient spacecraft could transport their wide-eyed crews to the vicinity of the moon. That, in fact, twentieth-century man could walk on the surface of a celestial body previously beyond his reach, if not his dreams.

Verne begat Wells, and Wells begat Gernsback, and Gernsback begat *AMAZING*, and *AMAZING* begat its imitators. These magazines provided a breeding ground for a veritable invasion force of dreamers--among them Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, and Arthur C. Clarke, who, in turn, quickened the imaginations of yet another spate of visionaries.

I do not contend that the subculture of the science fiction world--teenage readers and underpaid writers existing in passionate symbiosis through the medium of the clumsy pulps--put the first satellite in orbit or scripted Neil Armstrong's historic exit line from the lunar module Eagle. But I do argue that this subculture cheerfully took its knocks in legitimizing the dream. Some of its members have long played crucial roles in the triumphs of Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, and the current shuttles.

Indeed, today the mental climate of the industrial West routinely encompasses science-fictional weathers. On Tuesday and Thursday a pair of American astronauts walked untethered in space, miniature moons, strapped in their flying chairs like men sentenced to a revivifying electrocution. They were making new the dream.

The failures of the lost two communication satellites aside, I applaud that fact, because my first reaction to these new spacewalks was not awe or wonder but a cool, matter-of-fact acceptance. Ho-hum. We're jetting around out there like space-going squid. Haven't we done that before? Oh, not in exactly this way? Well, well, well.

Only when I was asked to assess the meaning of this latest technological feat did I realize that I have begun to take for granted what every earlier generation of twentieth-century dreamers predicted and anticipated with a fervor almost religious. What does it mean? It means that we can do whatever we dream. It suggests that perhaps we ought to start dreaming humane solutions for problems without the promise of a quick or even a long-term technological fix.

If we can fly untethered in Earth's orbit, maybe we can also contrive a way to live interconnected on the planet itself. There is no way, down here, to ignore the tether.

(From the Atlanta JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION, February 11, 1984.)

--Michael Bishop



## An Interview With

# BEN BOVA

conducted by  
David Pettus

Ben Bova is well known in the science fiction field as an author, editor and space and technology advocate. After graduating from Temple University in 1954 with a degree in journalism, Mr. Bova worked as technical editor for Project Vanguard and manager of marketing for Avco Everett Research Laboratory. After the death of John W. Campbell, Jr. in 1971, Bova became the editor of *ANALOG* and rose to prominence as he broadened the magazine's appeal and readership, earning a long string of Hugo Awards for Best Editor.

Bova is an accomplished author as well, both fiction and nonfiction. Novels like *Millennium*, *Colony*, and *Voyagers* have established him as a respected author of high-tech, near-future SF, and such nonfiction books as *In Quest of Quasars*, *The Fourth State of Matter*, *The Seeds of Tomorrow*, and *The High Road* mark Bova as one of our finest science writers as well. Bova's book on writing, *Notes to a Science Fiction Writer*, may be the best manual of observations and advice for would-be SF writers currently available. He has written articles recently for such magazines as *SCIENCE 84*, *SCIENCE DIGEST*, and *OMNI*, newspapers such as the *WASHINGTON POST* and *PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER*, and even such women's magazines as *SELF* and *MODERN BRIDE*.

As president of the National Space Institute, Bova has been devoting a great deal of time recently to pushing the pro-space movement, including testifying before Congress and the party election campaign platform committees during 1984, and working hard to bring about a merger between the L5 Society and NSI, two of the largest pro-space groups in the world.

Since this interview was conducted, Bova has finished writing *Assured Survival*, published by Houghton Mifflin in October, 1984. In October 1985, Tor Books, which is now handling all Bova's paperback fiction editions, will publish *Astral Mirror*, a collection of fiction and nonfiction pieces, in paperback, and his new novel, *Privateers*, in hardcover. *Privateers* is about a near-future where the Soviets have won the Cold War, the United States has re-

treated to isolationism and economic depression, and a small group of American expatriates is trying to maintain their free-enterprise industrial base in orbit despite growing Soviet pressures to shut them down. He has also just finished writing the sequel to *Voyagers* mentioned in the interview. A title has not been chosen. It picks up eighteen years after the first novel ended, with Keith Stoner being revived from cryonic sleep. He has been frozen inside an alien spaceship, and **something** has worked its way into his mind.

Ben is also currently writing a motion picture script, based on his short story, "A Small Kindness," published in *ANALOG* a few years ago. The script is being done for Advent Productions of Salt Lake City, Utah. Later this year, Bova plans to begin rewriting *Kinsman* and *Millennium*, bringing them together as a single, unified biography of Chet Kinsman. He also plans a nonfiction biography of a Nobel Laureate, and a high-tech thriller called *The Sword of Stalingrad*.

Ben Bova is also well known for his work as editor of *OMNI* magazine, where he played a fundamental role in the success of that trend-setting publication. Bova is now writing full time and living in Connecticut.

**Thrust:** Science magazines are getting slicker looking now, and science itself seems to be picking up in popularity. Why do you think this has happened?

**Bova:** Basically, I believe the average magazine reader has come to realize that science plays an important part in his or her life and that science is interesting. At *OMNI*, for instance, I always tried to treat science as entertainment. Entertainment need not be naked women jiggling on a stage; there can be intellectual entertainment. There is a certain thrill in thinking about the origins of the universe or the origins of humanity in pre-history, or trying to

figure out what the future will bring. All of these things can be entertaining if presented properly, and that's what we tried to do at OMNI. Most of the new science magazines are moving in that direction, and are finding a very large audience. But those magazines have to be written and edited for the average reader, unlike SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN or the scientific journals which are written for a specialized elite.

**Thrust:** Do you think that simplified "popular" science might do more harm than good for science? Are good public relations worth it?

**Bova:** I think knowledge is always better than ignorance. Science is so important, it's crucial that people understand what science can do and what it cannot do. They also must understand that they can decide how far science will go and in what direction. The push for good public relations in science is not widespread, but scientists should be doing science, not appearing on stage. There are occasionally individuals like Carl Sagan who are scientists with a flair for talking about science to the general public, helping them to understand the excitement and power of it all. But most scientists would rather be **doing** science, and leave the explanations to those of us who have spent our lives learning how to do it properly.

**Thrust:** But do you believe there is any danger in the over-popularization of high-technology and complex science, making it all sound simple when it **isn't** simple, making things that will happen in the future sound like they are ho-hum and have already happened? As they say, a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing . . .

**Bova:** I think I see what you're driving at. I don't think it's dangerous. I tend to be a Jeffersonian about information, possibly due to my journalistic background. The more information that you have, the better able you are to make up your own mind about what is true and what is false. More information is always preferred.

**Thrust:** Do you see an emphasis on futurism in government and big business today?

**Bova:** I think there has been somewhat of an emphasis in the past ten to twenty years. It's growing to some extent, but it may have more or less leveled out. What I see in many cases is that futurism--and the broad area called technology assessment--is being used as a means to prevent the future from happening. I have served on a couple of panels of the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment and it seems that when the government has decided it's going to do something, it just goes ahead and does it.

**Thrust:** Regardless of fact and expert opinion.

**Bova:** That's right. In fact, when they want to prevent something from being done, they order a study on it, appoint committees to poke and prod it, and usually that will kill an idea or program. Look at the contrast between going to the Moon and building solar power satellites. We went to the Moon because the President convinced the American public that we should, and we did it magnificently. We did in such a short time and so easily that many people today believe that it was nothing but an easy stunt. Now the scientific community wants to build solar power satellites, but we have run into a quagmire of government studies and public indifference. If we had a President who would tell the American people, and convince them that we should build just one of these things and see how it works, then it would be done in five or ten years. And I'm convinced it would be profitable.

**Thrust:** I sometimes think landing on the Moon was just a stunt which actually set us backwards in developing a real space program. The development of the space shuttle seems

to be, finally, a move in the right direction.

**Bova:** I think that getting us to the Moon provided two very important things that made the shuttle possible. One is a technology base that we just didn't have in 1961. The other is the management system that NASA developed, which is one of the unsung inventions of the Space Age. It is a wonderful tool, and much of the credit must go to Jim Webb. When he was director of NASA, during the Moon years, they developed a management system which is the model, for government and corporation alike, for dealing with large, complex technological projects. Going to the Moon provided that base, and the space shuttle was built from it. We simply waited ten years before actually building the space shuttle.

**Thrust:** You mentioned the impact of a President getting the people behind a technological project. What do you think about President Reagan's push for "Star Wars" military defense?

**Bova:** I think that President Reagan has been the best President for the space program since John Kennedy. And that's coming from a man who has felt slightly left of center all his life. I don't agree with many of President Reagan's conservative statements and some of his policies, but as far as space is concerned I think he has been much better for NASA than the previous three incumbents in the White House.

**Thrust:** NASA keeps talking about a space station. How soon will people live and work in space?

**Bova:** There are two Russians living and working in space right now. Today. There have been about seventy Russians and other socialist nations' Cosmonauts living and working in space all through the 1970s and 1980s. It has been a rare event over the past twelve or thirteen years for us **not** to have people in orbit working. Because they are not Americans, people tend to think no one is up there. But people **are** working in space right now. The Russians have put an extension on their Salyut VII spacecraft. They have docked the Space Tug to it. Salyut VII is there to stay. It's the first set of modules for a permanent space station.

**Thrust:** I understand that the United States plans to get a space station underway by 1991.

**Bova:** That's right. Although the President doesn't confide in me, the people I know who know him say that he is enthusiastic for it, but that the people around him in the White House are worried about the expense and whether or not it's the right thing to do.

**Thrust:** I understand that NASA's cost estimate is eight billion dollars over ten years.

**Bova:** That's not quite as much money as the American public spends each year on video games. It is **not** a lot of money. Compared to the power of this nation's economy, it is chicken feed. We spend more on spare parts for obsolete missiles! It's a matter of scale. And on the scale of what the country spends on cosmetics or liquor, or gasoline, or cocaine, eight billion dollars isn't a lot of money at all. The space program in its entirety is so small that every year, when the national budget is released with the pie charts showing who is getting what, there is no slice for space. It's too small to be included on the chart.

**Thrust:** The Department of Defense seems to be doing more and more of the important space work, including the shuttle and space-related technology, leaving NASA behind to do pure research. Do you think that's a good division of labor?



**Bova:** I don't think that's the way it's going, but I think it would be a good division of labor if it went that way. I'm sure that there is a faction within NASA who want complete control on the operation of the Space Shuttle. The original plan was that after four flights, the Shuttle would be operational. In actuality, however, it will be another few years before the Shuttle is operational the way a commercial airliner is operational. NASA is still very much in the testing and R&D phase with the Space Shuttle. There are people at NASA who feel that Agency should operate it like a bus line when it goes fully operational. I disagree. NASA is great at doing research and development, developing new space technology, and exploring the universe. And that's what they should do. If they take over full time operation of the Space Shuttle, NASA will eventually turn into a transportation company and the R&D will become a secondary function. Regarding military operations, I'm in the middle of writing a book on that.\* It is unfortunate that space is, and has been for twenty years, an arena for military operations. Now it's getting more dangerous up there with the possibility of putting lasers and other weapons there to combat ICBMs. I don't want to see space turned into a battlefield. Most Americans agree with that position. On the other hand, neither do I want to live the rest of my life and see my children live their lives with the constant threat of instantaneous nuclear devastation coming out of space. So we've got to work out some means of using space as a shield. And I think it will only work if it's a shield for **everyone**. Not just the United States, and not just the Soviet Union, but the whole world. The technology is very difficult--to put up a system of laser-armed satellites that can destroy ballistic missiles--but the politics of making that defensive system a truly international shield for all the nations of the world makes the technology look simple!

**Thrust:** What you're talking about, essentially, is making nuclear weapons obsolete.

**Bova:** What I'm talking about is a term that I've coined--"warfare suppression". I believe it is possible to prevent wars from happening with defensive weapons.

**Thrust:** That certainly sounds good.

**Bova:** It sounds good until you realize that to make the system work, the United States would have to give up its self-defense capability to some international organization that is yet to be created. That's a very scary thing to do. But it's also scary knowing you're only thirty minutes away from nuclear armageddon.

**Thrust:** You have written about quasars, plasma physics, star flight, and numerous other high technology subjects. In **The High Road**, you say that "to survive on Earth we must expand into space." There has long been such controversy over the so-called choice between spending money in space or spending money on the ground. Your position is that we can use the space effort to solve our problems here on the ground. Can you elaborate on that?

**Bova:** There is a chapter in **The High Road** called "The Danger of Either/Or". People tend to think that **either** we spend a dollar on feeding the poor **or** we spend it in space. They don't see the interconnection. They don't see that the Apollo program, while putting twelve men on the Moon, employed somewhere between two and three million people here on Earth. It's no coincidence that when that program was killed our nation began sliding into economic recession. In space, we are going to build new industries. New sources of materials and technology that can have an enormous effect on the economy of Earth. I believe that every dollar spent on space can do more for the poor people of Earth than a dollar handed to them directly. We have seen a huge electronics industry develop as a direct result of

the space program. The whole electronics boom of Silicon Valley is really a result of our decision to go to the Moon.

**Thrust:** The spin-offs from the space program have indeed been considerable.

**Bova:** When you use the word spin-off people say, oh yea, Teflon frying pans, so who cares? I have been asked by interviewers in television studios where the signal is being sent via satellite across the country, "what good has space really done?" and I always say that if we hadn't gone into space, they wouldn't have a job right now.

**Thrust:** I would hope that that makes them sit up and take notice.

**Bova:** It does indeed.

**Thrust:** There is a lot of talk about the Third Industrial Revolution which will develop in space. Do you think it will happen?

**Bova:** I believe so. The alternative is a deepening economic downturn all around the world. Population pressures are beginning to limit how well we can feed and house and care for the people of the world. We need to continue to develop **new** sources of wealth. It is not sufficient to make do with Earth's limited resources and keep cutting the slices of the pie thinner and thinner. Every day a quarter of a million babies are born. We have 4.7 billion people on Earth today and you can see the international tensions, terrorism and crime, even in wealthy societies such as ours. Violence, hunger, poverty--imagine the world in fifteen years, when there are six billion people. Or in thirty years with eight or ten billion people. If we do not enlarge our base of resources then everyone is going to be poorer and hungrier and closer to the edge. That way lies disaster. On the other hand, we have an entire solar system full of resources to draw upon. We know it's there--more natural resources than we could get out of the whole planet Earth, and plenty of energy to do the work. We have the technology to begin this, and in a small way the job has already begun. The Space Shuttle, and some of the industrial experiments being done aboard are the first tiny steps toward a solar-system-wide economy. I don't see much good sense in exporting Earth's billions of people into space, but I think it makes good sense to send a few people out with machines to take the resources we need and bring them back to Earth. What I'm talking about in real estate terms is moving the mines and factories out to the suburbs, out into space where God always intended them to be. That's where most of the raw materials are, and the sun's free energy. That's where you can reap the benefits of low gravity and perfect vacuum for various manufacturing processes. The Earth is a great place for us to live. We should stop polluting our home planet. We should move industry into space and turn the Earth into a residential zone.

**Thrust:** The book **Megatrends** became very popular--what trends do you think will mean the most in the next quarter century?

**Bova:** On the technological side, our expansion into space and the new materials that will be developed in low gravity are going to be very important. I think genetic engineering and related biological technology is going to have a much bigger impact on human life than nuclear power. Politically, I see a trend towards closer cooperation between nations. I think the East/West confrontation is going to be gradually re-oriented into a North/South confrontation, with the rich, industrial nations, which are mostly white, will be facing-off against the poorer nations, which are mostly non-white. The Third World has already begun to realize that space offers a competitor for their natural

resources. This is one of the motivations, I believe, behind the drafting of the Moon Treaty which would effectively prevent free enterprise from moving industrial operations into orbit.

**Thrust:** What comes after the Space Shuttle in our space program?

**Bova:** Bigger and better Shuttles. Just as what came after Charles Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis was eventually Boeing 747s and the supersonic Concord. We'll have Shuttles, and other types of vehicles, taking off like airplanes and going into orbit. We'll have very large boosters that can put enormous tonnages into orbit very cheaply. And were going to have space going vehicles, built in orbit and never intended to come back to Earth, their operations being completely in space.

**Thrust:** You have written at least one non-SF political novel, *The Multiple Man*, but it seems to me that all of your books are essentially political novels. You put a lot of emphasis on politics in *Millenium*, *Colony*, *Voyagers*, and your other books as well. Can you separate people and politics?

**Bova:** I don't think so. Politics is interpersonal relations. A professor at Temple University once defined a politician as someone who can get free people to work together. It's one thing to be a military officer, able to give orders and administer punishment if commands are not carried out, but in a democracy, politicians must be able to convince people that they should work together, even though they don't have to do it, and can't be forced to do so. I don't think you can write a novel about people without writing about politics also.

**Thrust:** I have noted that in general in your books, scientists tend to look toward the long run and politicians tend to look toward the short run, so that there is a natural clash of philosophies between them.

**Bova:** Yes. Scientists are looked upon by politicians as a sink for money. They think that no matter how much money you give them, they'll always ask for more. Scientists feel that it is *their* work which produces all the good things in life, and see themselves as a *source* of money. They think of the money they need as an investment. Politicians in Washington tend not to look beyond this year's budget. They see the National Science Foundation wanting a billion dollars for basic research, and all they see is the money disappearing. This is the reason you see people like Proxmire giving out Golden Fleece Awards to some research spending nickels and dimes, while Proxmire himself votes for a billion dollar milk subsidy.

**Thrust:** Do you think that your work as an editor, at ANALOG and then OMNI, has overshadowed your work as a writer?

**Bova:** Yes, I think it has. Moving into ANALOG and the world of science fiction was an important part of my life, as well as great fun. I enjoyed discovering writers like Spider Robinson and Orson Scott Card, but it overshadowed almost completely my own writing. I continued to write nonetheless, although much of what I write is aimed at a larger audience than the science fiction readership.

**Thrust:** I often find your books in the "general fiction" section of book stores. Do you tend toward near future adventures to seek a larger audience than exists for far future material?

**Bova:** I like dealing with the near future. The first book I wrote, around 1950, which will never be published, was about the first trip to the Moon. No one wanted to publish it in the fifties. One editor was finally kind enough to

tell me, "Look, kid, this isn't as bad as half the junk we publish, but you've got this ridiculous plot about the Russians going into space before the Americans, and the Americans launching a crash program to get to the Moon before the Russians. Not only is that ridiculous," he said, "but there is a Senator Joseph McCarthy running around the country who will crucify you and me if we publish this. So write something about the far future that has no possible views on today's events." So that's what I did. It was one of the world's worst thud and blunder novels set in the far future--it makes *Star Wars* look tame--and they bought it. With the next few books, however, I did manage to bring the subject closer to the here and now.

**Thrust:** Have any of your books been optioned for film production?

**Bova:** Several of them. But they've never gone into production.

**Thrust:** Which book would you most like to see produced?

**Bova:** I would like to see *Millenium* filmed. But it's the one least likely to be picked for film adaption because it's the one I would want to control the closest. I'm very close to that book, and I would not let it be taken over by some outfit to do whatever they want with it. That probably means I will never be able to strike a deal, not because of money, but control.

**Thrust:** We've talked about the future, and SF--what about the future of science fiction?

**Bova:** I see SF being absorbed by the mainstream. The best-seller lists regularly feature science fiction now, and many best-selling non-SF writers (such as Robert Ludlum) are writing SF novels, although not labeled as such. The reading public is reading SF even without a label on it and it has become a totally acceptable part of the general public's entertainment milieu.

**Thrust:** Your books don't have the words "science fiction" plastered all over the covers. Is this something you insist upon?

**Bova:** Yes. I would rather talk to a million people than one hundred thousand. I'm egocentric enough to think I have something important to say, so I would like to talk to a larger audience. CBS Morning News has asked me to be their science and technology expert. I'm appearing on the program about weekly now, and I find it very exciting, because the TV audience is *much* larger than the book audience.

**Thrust:** Any future projects you can tell us about?

**Bova:** I've written a new novel, *Orion*, published by Tor Books this year (1984). It is a fantasy adventure dealing with time travel. It was fun to write, and I hope the readers will find it fun to read. I am just finishing a non-fiction book about the consequences of orbital defense against ballistic missiles. The title is *Freedom From Fear\** and it will be published by Houghton Mifflin; it's a sort of follow-up to *The High Road*. I am also doing a lot of magazine writing--articles for PLAYBOY, OMNI, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, and a couple of pieces for U.S.A. TODAY, the national newspaper. One upcoming project that I definitely plan to do is write a sequel to *Voyagers* which will finish the story.\*

**Thrust:** Thank you, and best of luck.

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\* Published as *Assured Survival*, Houghton Mifflin, 1984.



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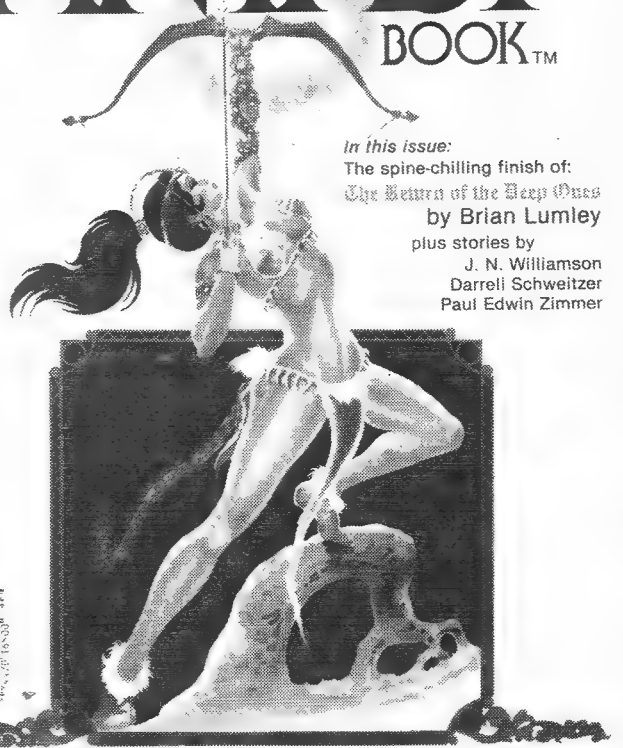
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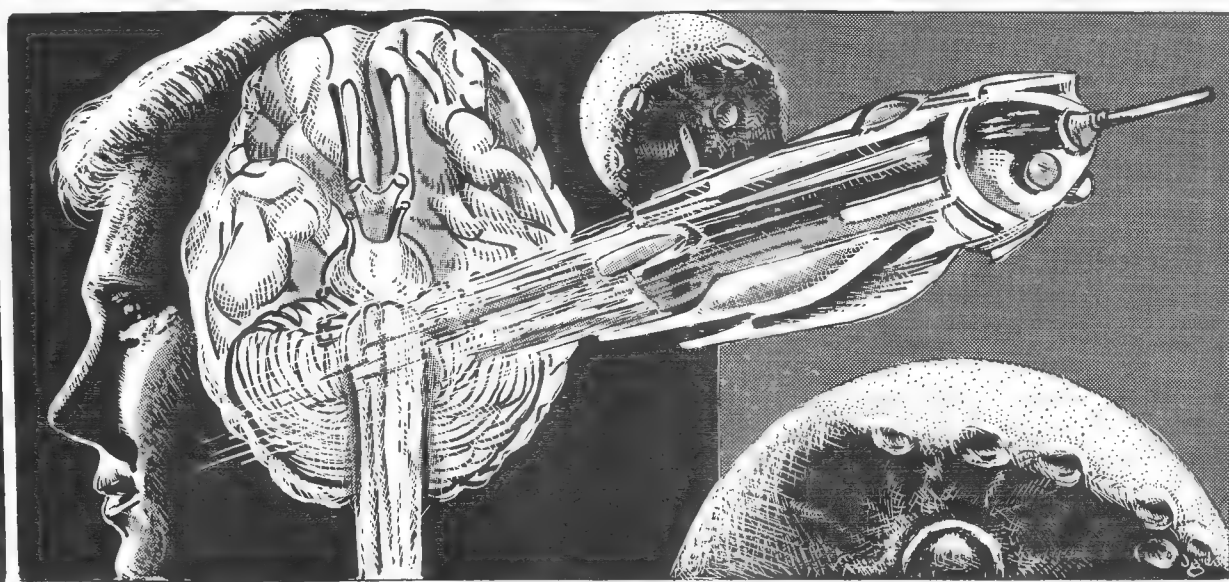
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# IMMORTALISM: "The Long-Range View"



## Marvin Kaye

### PART ONE: ON FIRST ENCOUNTERING IMMORTALISM

When I was in my teens, I read *Opus 21*, Philip Wylie's harrowing novel of one man's dreadful weekend waiting to find out whether the growth in his throat is malignant or benign. It contains this memorable passage:

"The nurse calls:  
Mr. So-and-so. Mrs. So-and-so. Miss So-and-so.  
They go in.  
'Doctor,' they say, 'just lately I've begun to notice . . .  
They have begun to notice Death.'"

I first noticed Death when I was a child and one of our dogs had to be "put to sleep." I was mutely terrified. My lifelong fascination with fantasy-horror literature and films stems from fear of personal mortality. A tale of a supernatural night-creature implies a continuance of self. It is no coincidence that we have been deluged with horror novels and movies for the past few decades. In an age that has come spiritually unmoored at the same time that the threat of death on a global scale has actually become banal, it is no surprise that millions have turned to church, to pseudo-science, even to satanism for their insufficiently-refuted promises of ultimate survival.

"Are you sitting down?"

That's the way I heard it. Four terse words over a telephone. The question was a minor kindness, an attempt by my sister to erect a wall of words between me and what she had to tell. She asked it and I already knew what she was about to tell me. It was shortly after I moved to New York from Pennsylvania. I was living in a one-and-a-half-room studio and there were few places to sit. I said yes to my sister, though I was actually standing. My mother's health had been deteriorating for months. The whole family dreaded the answer we all already knew.

"Are you sitting down?"

It was that unavoidable moment when death no longer could be ignored. Nothing I'd read or seen prepared me for the stark obscenity of the fact itself. The details of the long wasting disease that killed my mother have been chronicled by others, but I faced a less common agony because I'd read a book during that time . . .

**The Prospect of Immortality** by Robert C. W. Ettinger.

In discussing almost any modern book, I would shrink from using that overused term, "classic," and even "cornerstone work" is hard to justify. There is a wonderfully cynical aphorism in Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* which, translated by the late Walter Kaufman, states that "What is timely will pass away with the time." Yet I must recommend Ettinger's book as the absolute key to understanding the many scientific and social issues of the so-called cryogenics movement. Cryogenics, also known as cryonics, deals with the freezing of the body as soon after death as possible in order to preserve the integrity of the tissues until such time as it is possible to cure the subject of whatever illness or accident caused his or her death. The slogan of the movement is "Freeze, Wait, Reanimate." In *The Prospect of Immortality*, Ettinger not only outlines the methodology of achieving long life, but also discusses clearly and persuasively the crucial affiliated issues of legalities, religious considerations (the organized church is fundamentally supportive of the cryogenics plan) and financial problems. Ettinger anticipates virtually every formula objection that can be raised against immortalism and demolishes the lot.

And yet I found the tradition of the "death wish" impossible to overcome when my mother was dying.

I was born into a world steeped in death. Hitler was rising to power and atrocities became commonplace table talk. But it was also a wonderful age, America in the 1940s. I loved radio, cut my imagination's eye-teeth on it. Across the street was a movie theatre, my perennial babysitter, and one true religion. My father was an elec-



tronics technician, so we even had TV years before the medium was released commercially. Wonders were daily fare. I dreamed of flying, of rocketing into space, even though I knew neither would occur during my lifetime. But today there are rocket packs that can be strapped on the back and we have outshot the Moon. It is not surprising that reading Ettinger made me seriously consider the promise and burden of life without foreseeable end. I am used to scientific miracles. I have come to expect them. But I could not help my mother.

I am the youngest of four children, separated by nine years from the next eldest. I never wielded much authority in my family. It was decided that my mother would not be told her condition was terminal. She spent her last months in Florida. As she readied herself for the plane trip, I remember her forlornly expressing the hope that a warmer climate would indeed help her condition. She died in Florida, and to this day it is, to me, a land of artificial promise.

I wanted to suggest to my mother or at least to my father the cryonic idea, but I didn't have the courage to go counter to the family's policy. I honestly think she might have welcomed the suggestion. I'll never be sure, but the price is to stand convicted in my own eyes, paying with unresolvable feelings of guilt.

A few years after my mother died, I took an improvisational acting class at the HB Studio in Greenwich Village. One of the other students and I teamed up to perform an improvisation supposedly set in the corridor of a hospital. We were outside the room of our dying mother, and we were supposedly brother and sister. I elected to explain the idea of cryonic burial to my ersatz sibling. My partner played her as an unimaginative middle-class housewife who had a great deal of trouble dealing with her mother's death--and no capacity whatsoever to understand the weird idea her brother was trying to suggest. As a result, the scene was intense and utterly emotional. Now my choice of

role and objective was dictated by that sense of personal failure which makes one replay life's mistakes over and over in the fruitless attempt to find some imaginary scenario where they are not committed. I thought, and my partner thought, we were performing high drama.

But the class laughed.

When we all discussed the improvisation afterwards, the reason for the mirth became apparent. There is something profoundly absurd in the spectacle of two persons with enormously different spiritual values vainly trying to convince one another of anything important. It is a rule that applies equally to families, political rivals and occupied nations.

In spite of this caveat--and inevitably from the still-unresolved need to expiate personal demons--I have long explored the many issues of immortalism in print, both in essay and fiction (*The Masters of Solitude* and *Winter-mind*, especially). As rich a source book as *The Prospects of Immortality* is, there are important analogues and roots in our culture which Ettinger did not explore. It is not necessary, for instance, to accept freezing burial as a viable mode of preserving life in order to be an immortalist, i.e., one who contends there is an *a priori* value in living an enormously extended life. Ettinger himself regards the freezing movement as a stop-gap. If disease and aging can be biologically checked and reversed, it is far better to do so while the body is still alive. The chances of success are greater than the merely theoretical possibility of reanimating someone who has passed into clinical death, when the pulse and breathing cease.

The question of the greatly extended life is complex, subtle and occasionally riddled with contradiction. I will examine some of these aspects of immortalism in future installments of this column.

- Marvin Kaye

Next Issue: "Beyond the Comfort Principle".

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# Thrust Profile:

## JANE YOLEN



by Stanley Wiater

If we accept the fact that it sometimes takes several books before an author can be recognized as a "brand name," one can understand the frustration of science fiction and fantasy author Jane Yolen. For Yolen isn't simply the author of one or two, or even a dozen books. A highly prolific children's author as well as a fantasy and SF writer, she has had no less than 80 books published. Yet her fans have to search in the "juveniles" section of the library or bookstore if they want to find her adult fantasy.

A 1960 graduate of Smith College, she lives on a converted farm in Hatfield, Massachusetts with husband David Stemple and their three children. Beyond being a wife, mother, and full time writer, she also travels around the country as a lecturer and teacher in various writers' workshops. "But first of all, I consider myself a storyteller," she explains when we sit down to talk in a spacious living room that is half buried in books and fantasy sculptures. "If I'm known for anything, it's as a teller of wonder tales, or fairy tales.

"But that's such a small portion of what I do! I've done non-fiction books, I've done mysteries, I've done science fiction, I've done song books, easy readers, picture books. So I've done a little bit of everything. I often say the only two things I haven't done are sports books and hard science books, and that's pretty close to accurate.

When asked how long she's been writing, Yolen immediately responds "forever." She sold her first poems and articles to national magazines while in college, and sold her first children's book on her twenty-second birthday. Yolen comes, in fact, from a family of writers as her mother and father were both published writers, while her brother is a professional journalist. Yet it's only been within the last decade that the readers of adult fantasy and science fiction have discovered her work as well. Indeed, she has had the recent distinction of being one of the guests of honor at the 1984 World Fantasy Convention in Ottawa, Canada.

"I hate the word 'juvenile,'" she says in the response to the section of bookstores and libraries where most readers have to go to find her work. "I always think that if you have to say 'juvenile fiction' for children, then you have to say 'senile fiction' for adults. Most of my fiction which is not fantasy or science fiction is definitely for children. But once you step into fantasy, the line is hard to draw. Many of my stories are 'cross-over' stories."

In explaining the term, Yolen elaborates the tricky business of seeing her short story first being published in a magazine such as THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION or ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE, but then being marketed as a "juvenile" when published in a hardcover collection, since most high fantasy hardcovers are sold to schools and libraries as children's books. Then finally, if the same collection is reprinted in paperback, the publisher will probably market it for an adult market in order to obtain an entirely different readership for the book.

"I write the same story," Yolen says, shrugging her shoulders philosophically, "and someone else decides how to market it. I try not to even think about it." A perfect example of this situation with Yolen's books is her Pit Dragon series. Each of the volumes are in hardcover editions clearly meant to appeal to young adults, while the paperback editions give no indication that they were ever meant as anything but "adult" high fantasy.

"I think what's happening is that a lot of people who were my readers when they were children have grown up and discovered that these stories still mean something to them



as adults. So they're carrying the stories with them into adulthood. But they're still the same stories--I haven't changed so much as has either the public's perception of my or the marketing of my work."

Yolen, who was born in New York City in 1939, is also aware that every genre goes in cycles of greater and lesser popularity. Of the three most common categories of fantasy--High Fantasy (Tolkien, Donaldson), Heroic Fantasy (Howard, Leiber), and Dark Fantasy (or supernatural horror)--Yolen readily admits that Dark Fantasy is currently what makes it most often to the best-seller lists, along with the "science fantasy" hybrids such as novelizations in the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* series. Instead of a young boy growing up with his dog, it's a boy and his laser sword learning how to save the galaxy.

"Children's books of the science fiction variety are very popular, primarily due to *Star Wars*. Just as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* let the way for a resurgence of high fantasy, *Star Wars* is doing the same for 'old-time adventure' science fiction." Yolen confesses she doesn't know how to write a best-seller, but doesn't deny that she wouldn't mind becoming a "rich and famous" author some day. Although she laughs while making these statements, she realizes that her audience is not interested in the novelizations or grim tales of horror that have made perhaps lesser talents than she both rich and famous.

Her style of fantasy--"tales of wonder" as she prefers to call them--is enjoyed more by "those with a more cultivated taste. They are people interested in history, even if it's revamped history, which is what so much of fantasy actually is." Her current project is entitled *Merlin's Book*, and is thirteen stories set in the time of the legendary magician Merlin. Meanwhile, her first strictly-adult fantasy novel, *Cards of Grief*, was published in late 1984 by Ace Books, and has become a Science Fiction Book Club selection.

*Cards of Grief* falls into that category of "science fantasy," in that the tale has both fantasy and science fiction elements. Based on two short stories, the novel takes place on another planet, and deals with a society where storytellers and artists are revered and valued above all other professions. Yolen laughs as she declares, "this is *real* fantasy!" The novel also tackles the popular theme of encounter between two alien societies, and how the investigation of one society by another inevitably causes change to the other.

But was *Cards of Grief* an adult work because it was purposely written for adults or was it a publisher's decision to target the book for an adult audience? Throwing up her arms, Yolen answers, "it is *definitely* an adult novel--there is SEX in it! It took me many hours to believe that I could write that into a book, but it is an integral part of the novel, because it's a society where men are potent for five years only. So everything is changed, especially when they meet the men from the spaceship who don't have this problem."

To write so many novels requires an extremely fertile imagination, which is shown by her published books covering every inch of a mantel piece--and that's not including all her anthology and foreign language editions. Yolen's beautifully decorated office is the size of most struggling writer's entire apartments, and she proudly tells us that it's one of the small rewards for "toiling in the vineyards for twenty-three years." Does she have enough ideas for another eighty books?

"I have so many ideas right now that I don't even have time to borrow ideas," Yolen states after relating how she was once inspired by a rock song by Gary Wright called "Dreamweaver." From that song came a book about an old woman who literally wove dreams, even though the song itself never even approached the same topic. "It would take me ten years to write down all the ideas I have today--in fact, I give away ideas to my students. 'Why don't you use this? Take this, I don't need it!'"

As the author of such acclaimed books as *The Emperor and the Kite* and *Greyling*, to name only two, does she have

any thoughts on whether her tales of wonder will still be wondrous after she's gone--to paraphrase another famous fantasy author--"beyond the fields we know?"

Yolen considers this for a moment, then confesses, "I really have faith that a number of these books are going to come back. Maybe long after I'm gone. Much the way Oscar Wilde and Hans Christian Anderson are being brought out again in single and full volume editions because in many ways my stories are like theirs--I don't know if they're as good as Oscar Wilde, but they're the same kind of stories. They're wonder tales that are very much a part of my life, and of the time I live in. So if in fact a hundred years from now there is still publishing--there is still a world, there's still people with two eyes who are actually reading--I think my stories will still be around. Not all of them, but probably most of the fairy tales. I think they'll last."

In the meantime, Yolen is enjoying her new found acceptance among "adult" fantasy readers. Her selection as a guest of honor at the 1984 World Fantasy Convention is only further testament to that fact. She also apologizes for being in love with her chosen profession; if she has any regrets it is that the work is never as perfect as one always hopes it might be.

"Edith Wharton said, 'I dream of an eagle, but I give birth to a hummingbird.' That's so true! You want to give birth to an eagle, but a hummingbird is beautiful, too. And that's something you have to remind yourself each time a piece is done: it's *not* the eagle you wanted. It's a little less than you intended it to be." She smiles wistfully, then knowingly concludes, "But sometimes, if you're lucky, it can be a little more."

"And that's why I have to write the next story . . ."

- Stanley Wiater

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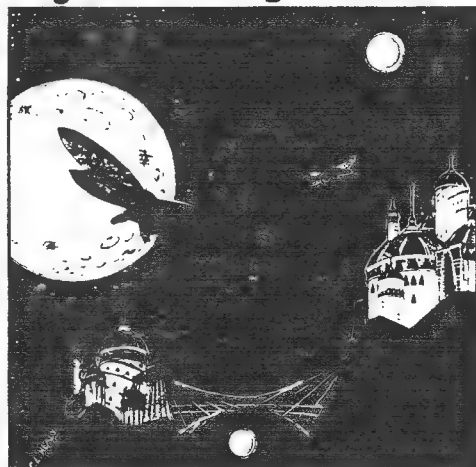
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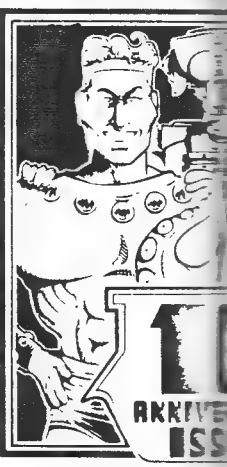


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Issue #9 (Fall 1977). Interview with Norman Spinrad; "Why I Am Not Announcing That I Am Leaving Science Fiction" by Norman Spinrad; Ted White on HEAVY METAL magazine; Chris Lampton on breaking out of the SF ghetto; SF comic strip by Steve Stiles; "Harlan, Come Home" by Charles Sheffield; "The Great Star Wars Debate" with Darrell Schweitzer, Ted White and Doug Fratz; comic strip by Dan Steffan; David Bischoff on the relationship between SF and fandom; book reviews.

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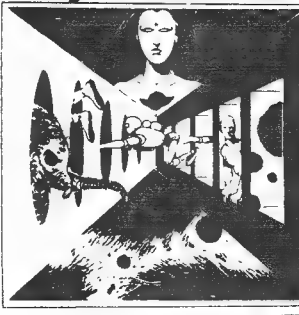
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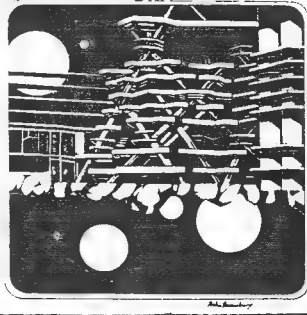
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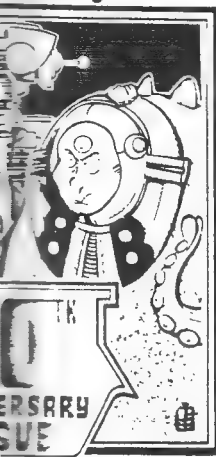
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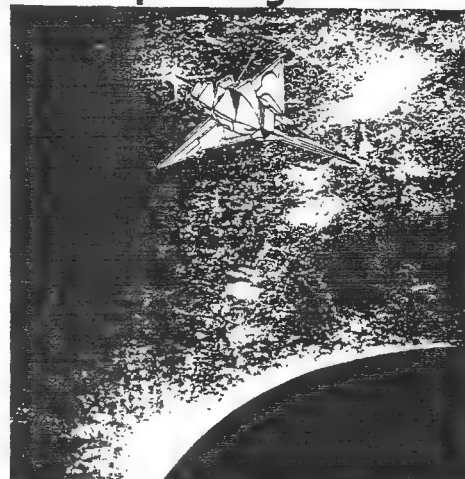
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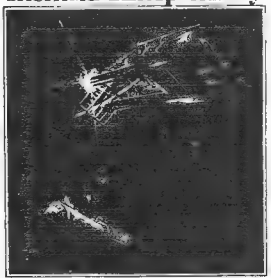
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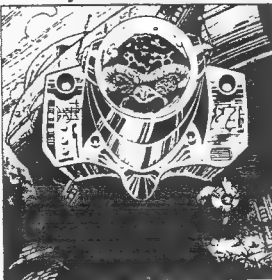
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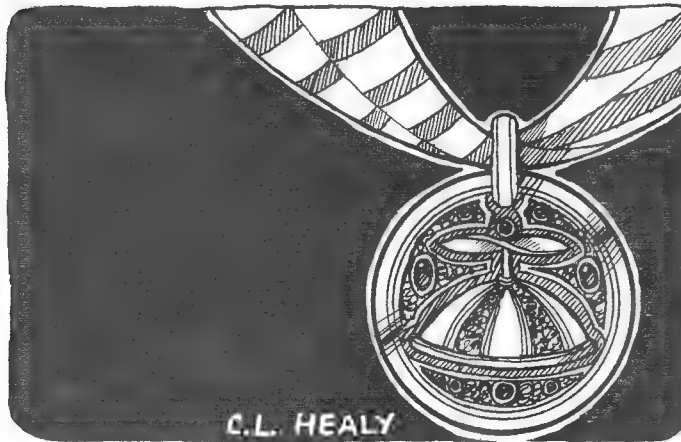


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# WORDS & PICTURES



## movie reviews by Darrell Schweitzer

There are very few films which exemplify what this column is about better than Michael Radford's **1984**. It is an excellent film which has been unjustly neglected due to circumstances irrelevant to its quality. To put it simply, it was made one year too late. Radford appears to have gotten the project going late in 1983, even though he must have known that a film of Orwell's **1984** which could not appear in 1984 made little commercial sense. The millions who thought that Sputnik, or the Moon landing, made science fiction obsolete would certainly dismiss Orwell's book the same way once 1984 was history. But Radford knew that **1984** has something important to say to our entire century, and perhaps to all time, and he made his film anyway. It was in and out of the theatres in a few weeks. I can only hope that it will be released on video cassette before long.

**1984**, the novel, is a very abstract, talky book. On first glance, it doesn't seem to be good movie material, because very little actually happens. The power of Orwell's vision, the convincing terror of it, comes primarily from its discussions on the nature of language and the meanings of words. I found the appendix, "The Principles of Newspeak," almost more frightening than the novel itself.

Radford has overcome this problem by putting himself into the mindset of the Ministry of Truth. This may often be a talky film, but not a static one. We are always seeing something which illustrates the points of the book: the grubby streets of London, children singing the glories of Big Brother while crossing beautiful countryside in the filthiest, most ramshackle railroad train imaginable, and, most importantly, TV screens. Like the denizens of Oceania, we are seldom out of sight of television propaganda, and Radford has produced this propaganda brilliantly. He opens with a long harangue on the glories of the state and the evil of its foes, with a film clip that has the same grey, washed-out look of World War II footage, or Nazi

or Stalinist propaganda films. The propaganda depicts a happy, united people fighting valiantly. The camera draws back into the audience and the film proper begins, and the real world is obviously very different from what they are supposed to believe. Thereafter, the TV screens are in the background in most scenes, the sound audible but not dominant. If you pay attention, you will notice some interesting things. Early on, a broken "traitor" makes a public confession of absurd crimes. At the very end, our hero, Winston Smith, is making virtually the same confession. The world of big brother is constantly at war (unless it is a government hoax), so there is lots of war footage, and always the forces of Oceania are on the verge of victory. Halfway through the movie, however, they change sides. East Asia, the unspeakable enemy of mankind, becomes a heroic ally, and Eurasia becomes the enemy. (Or way it the other way around?) The Ministry of Truth propaganda, of course, says that Eurasia has **always** been the enemy. Later, the war footage comes on TV again, suitably revised, but it is the same footage, making the same promises that the long war will soon end in victory. Radford subtly makes the point that the inhabitants of this totalitarian state are too numbed to notice.

Since our world isn't at all like that of Winston Smith and Big Brother, Radford properly makes the film a period piece of alternative history. Orwell's vision is rooted in the 1940s, so the movie has a strong 1940s look. The level of technology is 1948, with no computers or other modern gadgets. The ubiquitous propaganda films seem spliced from old newsreels. It actually looks more like the Spanish Civil War than World War II, which could be another subtle touch, since it was his experiences in Spain which led Orwell to his terrible vision. There is one mention of all this having come after an atomic war—a sop to the people unable to understand **1984** as alternative history—but otherwise the world of the film is timeless and self-contained.

The performances are excellent. John Hurt is perfect as Winston Smith—he seems to have a natural talent for misery, his spirited performance as Caligula in **I, Claudius** being an exception. Just as Errol Flynn was a great swash-buckler, John Hurt is a great sufferer. Richard Burton is also memorable as O'Brien, the government official who leads Smith into his illegal doings, then betrays him. He plays the role in a very low-key manner. His O'Brien is cynical, tired, empty, and believes in nothing. Perhaps he does what he does because Smith and his lover are alive in a way he cannot be, and therefore must be destroyed. He is the perfect character to utter one of the film's most chilling lines: "I'll give you a vision of the future: a boot in the face forever and ever." **1984** turned out to be Burton's last film. It was a worthy exit. Fate treated him far better than Peter Sellers, who went out on the awful **The Fiendish Plot of Fu Manchu**.

All the other performances work as well. Suzanna Hamilton is Winston Smith's lover, an ambitious character who may love Smith, or merely pretend to in order to spite the Party.

This film's relationship to George Orwell's original novel is quite complex, a worthy topic for a thesis by some film scholar. On the simplest level, you have to have read the book to appreciate it—I was sitting next to someone who hadn't read the book, and she was quickly lost. It is difficult to stop and lecture in a movie, as authors sometimes do in novels, which is one reason why SF movie backgrounds tend to be so simplistic. SF movie backgrounds need to be able to be summed up in one sentence, like "After an atomic war, the roles of humans and apes are switched." (While this misses much of the point of the book, **Planet of the Apes**, so did all the **Ape** movies.) For **1984**, Radford has taken the difficult course of **showing** Big Brothers lies through subtle images, through details, and especially through those propaganda films. He has to assume that his audience has at least read about Orwell's book. This too undoubtedly hurt him at the box office, limiting his audience to literates, but the film would have

been compromised any other way. (Interestingly enough, the film's one bad lapse is noticeably only if you have read the novel. There are dream sequences of Smith and O'Brien in the bright countryside, with O'Brien explaining the world to Smith in a fatherly way. They are not effective sequences, but worse yet, they make much use of the door to the famous Room 101, which Smith doesn't yet know about.)

**1984** resonates off the memory of the novel. It works like one of those plays of antiquity in which it was already assumed that the audience knew the background story. Then, rather than explain it all over again, the author would concentrate on his own special insights, as Radford has done.

On a completely different note, if Robert Zemeckis' **Back to the Future** had been made in the era in which it was set, it would probably have been called **I Was a Teenaged Time Traveller**. It is a fun film about a 17-year old from our time (Michael J. Fox) who is transported back to 1955, where he becomes involved with his parents and the inventor who built the time machine in 1985. The plot hinges on the familiar grandfather paradox. The hero accidentally prevents his parents from meeting. Therefore he must repair the damage before he and his whole family fade out of reality. This concept has apparently become familiar enough that it is possible to pass it off to a general audience without lengthy, and cinematically boring, explanations.

The 1955 setting is well realized, and Zemeckis makes many effective jokes about the cultural differences. One of the best toss-offs has to do with the hero "creating" rock & roll in classic time loop fashion.

This is an adolescent film in that it is about adolescence. The hero's concerns are not those of an adult, but anyone who remembers what it was like to be 17 can sympathize. This is a marked contrast to **The Last Starfighter**, where adolescent ignorance and superficiality are required to prevent the viewer from realizing how dumb it all is. Both films are aimed at the same audience, but **Back to the Future** actually has a much broader appeal: it may be popcorn for the mind, but it's gourmet popcorn.

SF fans seem to have completely ignored Woody Allen's last brilliant science fiction film, **Zelig**, a movie as certainly SF as many Sladek or Dick stories. It's about a mutant human chameleon who is such a social nothing that he becomes **exactly** like the people around him: fat among fat people, bearded among rabbis, et cetera. It's all told in the manner of a psychological case-study documentary set in the 1930s, with amazing use of old film footage, so that Woody is pinch-hitting for Babe Ruth, at a Hitler rally, and so on. **Zelig** deserved a Hugo Award, but I suppose most voters didn't think of it as SF due to the lack of whizzing rockets in it.

I hope that **The Purple Rose of Cairo** will be recognized as fantasy. It's a superb rendition of the old movie-becomes-real plot. In this case, an unhappy woman during the Depression (Mia Farrow) sits through so many escapist, romantic films that finally one of the characters on the screen turns to her and says, "You must really like this movie. You watched it five times." The character then steps off the screen and a love affair ensues, while the movie is stuck in that scene, the other characters arguing with the audience. Allen has thought his premise through, as any good science fiction writer should. His romantic male character is a 1930s movie figure, not a human being. The only reality he knows is what happens on the screen. So when he and Farrow get a bit too involved he looks around bewildered and asks, "Where's the fadeout?" But Allen is too subtle to do the obvious follow up to such a scene.

**The Purple Rose of Cairo** is good fantasy and good comedy. As is to be expected in a good comedy, there is a serious core to it, and even an unhappy ending which is both cruel and necessary since this is a film about people escaping into fantasy. I won't reveal that ending, except

to say that when the heroine is presented with a choice of a real world wish-fulfillment and an impossible and fantastic movie one, she would have been better off choosing the latter.

**1984** and **The Purple Rose of Cairo** are clearly adult films, and **Back to the Future** is a juvenile film enjoyable for adults as well. Disney's **Return to Oz** is a stranger case, uncomfortably straddling the fence. For adults, the plotting is too feeble, depending on outrageous coincidences and one obvious bit of string-pulling in which the characters fall thousands of feet onto a mountainside and--shades of **Indiana Jones** and **the Temple of Dumb**--nobody is hurt. For children, on the other hand, some of the scenes may be too terrifying. (I heard more than a few screams from small children in the audience.)

But the terrifying scenes are, for adults, the most memorable parts. There is an evil witch who changes heads every day. She keeps a collection of them in a row of glass cases. Dorothy has to steal a key from the sleeping witch, who suddenly awakens and sits up, headless, then gropes while all the heads are shrieking in alarm. It's a wonderful effect, even better than the (admittedly impressive) Gnome King, who slowly materializes out of the stones of his mountain. Also sure to give small children nightmares is a sequence in which Dorothy is about to be given electroshock therapy to cure her of those silly dreams about a place called Oz. She escapes from the asylum in a storm, falls into a river, and ends up in Oz. (No, it isn't all a dream this time; Dorothy is left with her own private proof that she really went to Oz.) This sequence embodies the basic juvenile fantasy of being oppressed by adults who are wrong and can't see what a child can. This appeal is aimed at children, but the gloomy intensity is more appropriate for adults.

**Return to Oz** is uneven, but has a lot of redeeming features. It is sumptuously mounted with the now-to-be-expected impressive special effects. The performances are all good, and Dorothy isn't icky-poo cute, but a real girl who makes a fine heroine. And surprisingly, coming from Disney, there is a talking chicken who isn't terminally cute. Disney has managed to avoid a movie that would have made adults barf, and even remain faithful to the original Judy Garland film and to Frank Baum. That is something of an accomplishment.

Walter Murch directed. This is perhaps the best feature-length Disney film (I discount **Dragonslayer**, which wasn't entirely Disney) since Walt Disney died. Maybe his ghost has stopped haunting the studio at last.

Obscure honorable mention: See **Brother From Another Planet** if you can. You may be able to catch it at some big-city art theatre. It has otherwise vanished without a ripple. It is a far better movie than would be expected from a plot synopsis: a black humanoid alien crashes in New York and moves into Harlem where he gets involved with drug dealers, while evading two very weird white alien pursuers. This is not a black exploitation film, but simply a look at how the other folks live. For white audiences, part of the fascination lies in watching the black characters in their own society on their own terms. The science-fiction elements make better satire than realistic SF. It is about time, I suppose, that we had a black alien, since the old cliché is that no matter how remote the planet, if there are native humans there, they will always be of Northwestern European extraction. But in this case, the black aliens are **slaves**, and the alien pursuers turn out to be slave-catchers, and it all becomes an obvious set-up to make a point. Not a great film, but an interesting one with some funny moments. The actors who play the alien pursuers must be professional mimes: they manage to convey remarkable weirdness through their movements. (Again the difference between print and film; if this were a book, they would just talk weird.)

- Darrell Schweitzer

# Thrust Interview: Sharon Webb

by A.J. Mayhew  
and J.R. McHone



Sharon Webb's first published science fiction story was "Hitch on the Bull Run" in the June 1979 issue of ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE. Since then she has continued to entertain and amuse her readers with fiction published in ASIMOV'S, AMAZING, PARSEC, *Crysalis* and various other magazines and anthologies. Her short story, "Variations on a Theme From Beethoven" (ASIMOV'S, 2/80) was selected by Donald A. Wollheim for his 1981 *Annual World's Best SF*. The story's themes of creativity and immortality would not leave Sharon Webb alone. Similar themes led to a novella, "Earthchild Rising" (ASIMOV'S 7/81), then to a book, and finally to a trilogy. *Earthchild*, the first book in the Earth Song Triad (as it is now being marketed) was published in 1982, followed by *Earth Song*, the second volume, in 1983. The final volume of the series, *Ram Song*, was published in 1984. All three volumes were published in hardcover by Atheneum, and are now available in paperback from Bantam Books.

This year saw publication of Sharon Webb's latest novel, *The Adventures of Terra Tarkington*, based on five pieces of short fiction published in ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE from 1979-1981 about a member of the Interstellar Nurses Corps. She currently lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains of north Georgia.

**Thrust:** When did you start writing and why?

**Webb:** I guess I was seven when I wrote a murder mystery. It shocked my mother! And I used to write a lot of dialogue and playlets. I guess I'm a frustrated playwright. When I was in high school I wrote for the school paper. I liked to read a lot as a kid, so I just naturally started playing around with words and pencil and paper.

**Thrust:** Why did you start writing science fiction?

**Webb:** I'd always read it and wanted to write it. But I

thought I couldn't because you have to know all this science. Then I went to nursing school and had to take a lot of chemistry, biology, anatomy and physiology. So I thought, "Aha! Now I can do it!" I think it was just psychological, because a lot of people write science fiction who have no science background. I was just a little intimidated, I suppose, by people like Isaac Asimov and Arthur Clarke, all the high-powered scientist types. Also, there are so many readers well-schooled in the sciences, if you do something wrong they let you know. It spoils the story for them. I've had stories spoiled for me the same way when there's some glaring error. All of a sudden the willing suspension of disbelief goes down the drain when there's something you know is wrong.

**Thrust:** Is there male chauvinism in the science fiction field?

**Webb:** Oh, sure, I guess it's everywhere, but probably less in science fiction than in so many other fields. There are a lot of women editors now. The majority of book editors now are women.

**Thrust:** So many new SF and fantasy writers are female.

**Webb:** Well, if you decide science fiction and fantasy, the majority of the newer fantasy writers are women, but the majority of new science fiction writers are men. There are few women who write solely or predominately science fiction.

**Thrust:** Where do you consider the line between science fiction and fantasy?

**Webb:** Well, it's all a form of fantasy. Probably SF is just a sub-genre, a specialized field of fantasy. SF readers are very educated, a lot of them in the sciences, and they have to have a lot of realism in their fantasy or



they can't swallow it. It has to be possible, if maybe not probable. But if you start dealing with magic wands and things without rationalizing it, then we call it fantasy. A lot of fantasy, too, is medieval-oriented, the sword and sorcery stuff. Science fiction is more future-oriented than fantasy, and more escapist in its own way, I think.

**Thrust:** What do you read?

**Webb:** I read all sorts of things. I get story ideas from science magazines, and magazines like NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC and THE SMITHSONIAN. I like to read SCIENCE '82 and OMNI. Science is such an enormous field you just can't keep up with it, even your own specialty. Reading general science magazines is a good what-if generator. I also love trashy horror novels, if they're not too gory--I like quiet horror. I don't read as much SF now as I used to. I read some mainstream novels. Lots of various non-fiction books, on politics, natural science, natural history. A little bit of everything, really.

**Thrust:** What science fiction writers have most influenced your work.

**Webb:** I suppose there are all sorts of subconscious influences. I can tell you who I have read and enjoyed the most. I have always liked Asimov and Bradbury, Sturgeon, Arthur Clarke, Frederic Brown, all the big greats, you know. Some Harlan Ellison I like very much, some I don't. George Martin, R. R. Martin--"Railroad"--I like his work very much. And I'm kind of a Somtow Sucharitkul fan, he's a good friend.

**Thrust:** We noted the inside joke in *Earthchild*, about Sucharitkul's "Rebirth". Is there such a musical composition?

**Webb:** No, but there will be. He's going to write it and debut it at the Conference on the Fantastic. In *Earthchild*, I describe how the piece of music begins. There's an oboe solo, and then the strings come in. When Somtow read that he said, "You know I don't write like that." I said, "Not now. But this is your mature period, you see, and you will." And he said, "Oh? I think I'll do it for this year's Conference on the Fantastic." That gives me a feeling of great power, generating this piece of music that didn't exist.

**Thrust:** It's common for new SF writers to be involved with writers' groups which meet regularly to give each other feedback and comments. Are you involved in or feel a need for that sort of thing?

**Webb:** I think probably every writer needs that. I correspond with a good many writers--sometimes we talk on the phone, or they come for a visit. Somtow was here recently. John M. Ford was here. Barry Longyear's a good friend. I correspond with Jane Yolen. And of course we get together at conventions.

**Thrust:** The idea of conventions is something you don't see in other fields.

**Webb:** You don't see it at all. The mystery writers are trying to get something going. But I don't think they can, because it has to be a totally spontaneous thing. Fandom wasn't generated by writers, but by people who love the field and wanted to get in touch with people who felt the same way. I don't think something like that can be generated, it has to just happen. The mystery writers have had a few conventions; they are trying. But there's a lot of difference, because in most fields there's a lot of professional rivalry--well, there is some in science fiction too, but there's something else which is very nice. It's a sense of fellowship and kinship with other writers. Because of conventions, we get to see each other and know

each other. This doesn't happen in other fields; most of them are extremely competitive. You don't have a feeling of helpfulness. George Scithers once said, because a lot of us have gone to writers' workshops, "I just don't understand it. You want to help people so they'll go into competition with you! Why do you want to do this? People help each other in this field. A lot of people have been very, very helpful to me. Ted Sturgeon, for example, has been marvelous to me. He's so wonderful, he's so--he's a teddy bear. He is so sweet, so very gentle. And a lot of other writers have been helpful. I see this as a debt. You can't do anything for the people who helped you, so what do you do? You try and help other people. And it's fun as well as a debt. You enjoy it because you meet so many marvelous people.

**Thrust:** Where would you recommend a writer send material first?

**Webb:** The rule is that you aim first for the top paying market and work down. Of course I don't always live by that. I tend to keep sending things to George Scithers. I consider George a very dear friend, and he's wonderful to work with. At ASIMOV'S he always sent galleys, he would send pictures--that one up there on the wall is the original from "Bridges." He's made every concession; he's very prompt, very fair, quick paying.

**Thrust:** Writing for a living is always a difficult decision. At what point can you decide that it's real now, I can support myself, and let go of the real world...

**Webb:** Supporting yourself, that's very, very difficult. I'm a member of the Author's Guild/ Author's League as well as the Science Fiction Writers of America, SFWA, which they pronounce as "Sifwa," I guess because it takes less time to say. Anyway, in SFWA there may be fifty writers who can make their living doing nothing else but writing in the field, out of more than 600 members. In all of the Authors Guild, and that's for all kinds of fiction, only about 500 authors can make a living. I'm not going to name any names, but one of those is a writer who has a cabin six months of the year, with no heat, electricity or water--he can't afford it. I know another full time writer who "makes a living" at writing; he lives in one of those old trailers that are ten feet wide, in a trailer park. Couldn't afford to have the gas turned on, ate cold food for five months last year. Now these people are, quote, "people making a living at writing." Sure there are some, like Stephen King, making a lot of money, but these are exceptions.

**Thrust:** There would seem to be more money in writing novels than in writing short fiction.

**Webb:** Oh yeah. You can get into residuals and subsidiary rights with novels. Stories can be reprinted, but there are limits to that. With novels you can make all kinds of other sales, such as foreign rights. Then there's always the possibility, however remote, that Hollywood might get interested.

**Thrust:** Have you optioned any of your books for movies?

**Webb:** I'll tell you a story about that. The first review of *Earthchild* came out early in PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY. Everyone in the business reads PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY. When the review came out, I was amazed at all the activity we had from it. I thought, "My gosh! This one little review! How powerful this reviewer is!" I had no notion that it worked quite like that. I mean, I knew that bookstores may order based on the reviews, and that daily newspapers are more likely to review a book that has been reviewed in PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY. But I didn't realize the scope of it all, how many people read that magazine and act on it. Within a week after the review came out, five producers had

called my agent to ask to see a copy of the book. There was a German publisher who called and asked for a story for an anthology, and there was some reaction from some paperback reprint houses. As for the movie people, we've had a turnaround from one. Paramount said they wanted to see the second book, and it's being sent to them in manuscript. I haven't heard from the others.

**Thrust:** I suppose that movie sales can bring in a lot of money.

**Webb:** But it's difficult to get anything made into a movie. You've got to please the producer, the director, and the actors, the star--they've all got to agree. Then you have to have a distributor. And it all takes lots and lots of money. It costs eight or ten million dollars to make even what by today's standards is a fairly low-budget movie. That's an awful lot of money to gamble on. And it's not just one person, there's a committee that has to agree on everything. It's fun to think about, but I'm not going to hold my breath over something like this.

**Thrust:** Every writing teacher says to "write what you know." But how do you write about the planet Vista, or about having fun in zero gravity, or other science fictional topics, and still just write what you know?

**Webb:** Oh, I think it's always what you know, because you're basically just writing about people. And how do you know people? You look inside yourself, you extrapolate, and you think. I've had people ask me how I, as a woman, can write from a male point of view. I think people are basically the same inside. There are differences, sure, but when I'm afraid I know what fear feels like, and I can imagine that it feels very much the same to you. We're all human beings, not aliens to each other; we're all people. So you just work out of your own experience, I guess pretty much like a method actor does. And we've all had the feeling of being in an alien place. I suspect that my Georgia mountains are very alien to some of my New York editors. A lot of them may think that it's pretty primitive down here, and maybe it is. I don't think so. To some just not being jammed up to neighbors can be frightening. But they compartment themselves off, and probably have less interaction with their neighbors than I do with mine, even though mine are far away.

**Thrust:** Do you start with ideas and then write a story, or start writing first and let the ideas flow?

**Webb:** It varies. I keep notebooks full of what I call "what ifs and other things." A "what if" is what if such-and-such happened. But those are not stories not until you do a "what then." That deals with people, their problem. You can write an essay from an idea, but fiction has to be about people, usually one individual. How a specific person reacts to a given situation. And that person should solve his or her problem, or at least change, even if only in a minor way. Stories are usually about traumatic events, either external events, like in an adventure story, or inside the individual. As to what comes first, the idea or the story, it's a chicken-and-egg thing, it can work either way. Usually I come up with an idea for a story, and there's a character or several characters, and I know the ending. I might not know how we're going to get there.

Sometimes a story just comes out of nowhere--"Variation" did. When I wrote the first page and a half, I didn't know anything about this boy or what was happening. I think I knew where he was, but that was it. I had no notion at all why he was called up in front of this committee. I was typing along and all of a sudden thought "Oh, my goodness! Is that what they want from him?" I had never thought of it consciously. Then after I wrote that story, it just wouldn't leave me alone, the whole notion of it. I got to thinking about the whole [immortality] process, and how

people would need to know how all this came about. It turned into a book, and then three books. After "Variation" came "Starchild Rising," and from there **Earthchild** and the rest. It was actually meant to be one big book, not three books. It is a bum wrap that people accuse writers of wanting to write trilogies because it makes more money. In my case, I was very distressed at the idea. It was the editor at Atheneum who pushed for the trilogy. I thought of it as one big, fat book. Some people will take a novelette and expand it into a novel, but there needs to be subplots and other things going on in novels. "Variation" is all in **Earth Song**, but it's split up into alternate chapters, and the significance of some of the events is altered in the context of other events. Right now the third book [**Ram Song**] isn't even written yet--I know how it starts and ends, but I'm completely in the dark as to what goes on in between right now, except in the vaguest kind of way.

**Thrust:** Did you consciously choose the immortality theme, or did it just happen?

**Webb:** I think it just happened. I didn't set out to write a book about immortals. I think if you were immortal it would be very difficult to grasp infinity. My character Kurt could not relate to it, so he had to chop it up into segments. He thought, "Well, I'll live one hundred years, then another hundred years." He could handle that. I think most people would do that, at least at first. People tend to need periodicity. You eat, you sleep, you wake up, and there's another day. You compartmentalize time. So many people have used the theme of ennui, the extreme boredom of the immortal. I didn't want to do that; it's almost a cliché. A lot of people are bored with life. But I know people ninety years old who get a lot more out of life than most people who are twenty five. I don't think that just because you are going to live a very long time you're destined to be bored to death. Not if you have enough resources within yourself. There's too much to learn about too many exciting things always going on. How can you be bored unless there is something lacking in yourself? You eat several meals a day, but you don't sit down and say, "Oh, no! Another dinner! I've had so many dinners in my life!" Sure, maybe if you ate hamburgers every night, but there're so many things to eat.

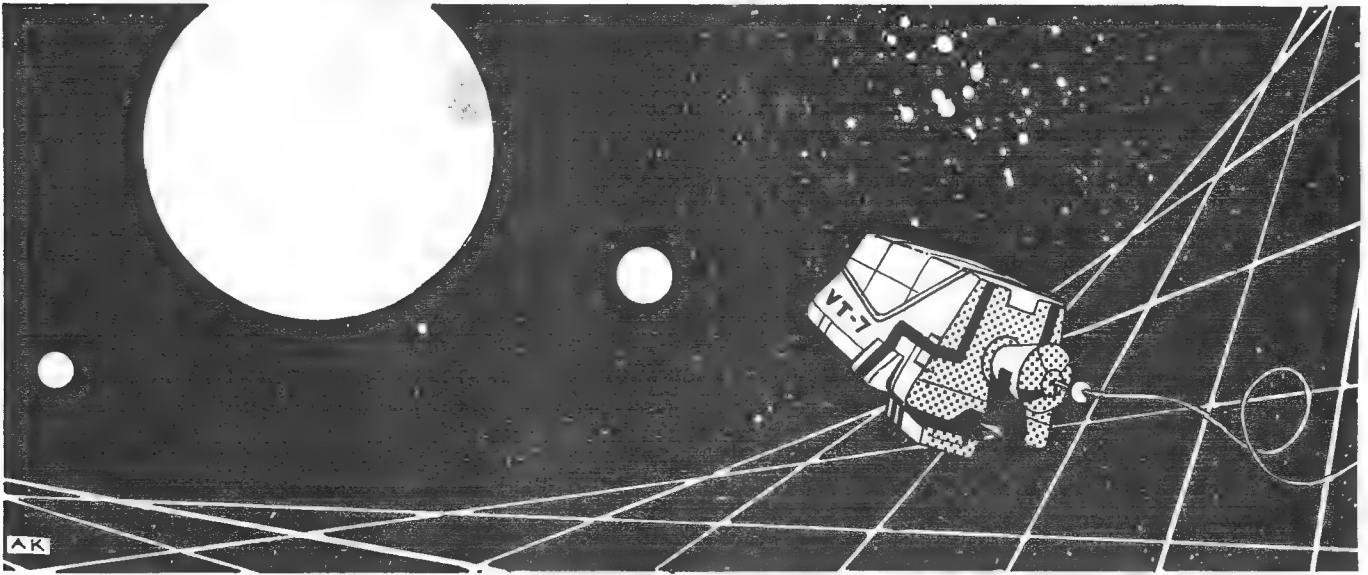
**Thrust:** What are some of your goals and ambitions? A Hugo or a Nebula Award, maybe?

**Webb:** I think every writer would love something like that. I guess everybody would like to think they can write a story one day that people will be able to read and enjoy later on. Everyone would like to write a classic. I guess my main goal is to continue writing, and try to get a little of what I conceive of as truth and beauty down on the page. To communicate with the reader that's the main thing. Another ambition is to get organized. I like to think I'm extremely efficient and organized but it's a delusion. For one thing, I'm an insomniac. I stay up half the night and can't get up in time to get underway when I would like to. I feel I just fiddle around too much sometimes. Correspondence is my downfall. I feel very guilty because I try to respond to all of it, and I'm terribly slow sometimes. Letters from kids I try to answer the same day, because I know kids are impatient. And to me it's very flattering if a kid writes me a letter. I also try to get business letters off fast. I sometimes take a day off now and then and just answer mail all day, because I get so far behind. So that's my ambition to get organized.

**Thrust:** A hundred years from now, what would you like people to say about Sharon Webb?

**Webb:** I think it would be wonderful if anybody said anything at all! Wouldn't that be great?

# THE ALIENATED CRITIC



## DOUG FRATZ

### Theodore Sturgeon and Me

By now I'm sure that every reader of THRUST has heard that Theodore Sturgeon passed away a few months ago on May 8th. Sturgeon was 67 years old, and died of fibrosis of the lungs, a chronic ailment, complicated by pneumonia. The science fiction field has lost an author who was one of its seminal influences, as well as one of the field's most distinctive voices.

Most of you have probably also read much of the outpour of obituaries and appreciations which have been printed in LOCUS, SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE and elsewhere. It is indeed impressive to listen to the many SF fans and professionals who were deeply touched not only by Ted Sturgeon's science fiction, but by the man himself in person. In fact, since Sturgeon has been far from prolific during the last 15 to 20 years, he may have had more influence on the SF field in that period in person than through the written word.

But in nearly 50 years of writing science fiction, Sturgeon has left a mighty legacy to the field. His body of work may be the most didactic of any SF author, but that quality seldom, if ever, detracted from the quality of his fiction, and in fact may have been its greatest strength. His work played a major role in my emotional and intellectual development when I discovered and began seeking out his stories as a teenager in the late 1960s. "If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your Sister?" from *Dangerous Visions*, for instance, was a major influence on my young, developing worldview. I have never reread that story since I first read it in 1968. I don't have to. It remains with me to this day.

It is surprising to me, and probably unfortunate for our culture, that Ted Sturgeon never really broke through to have a major impact on our society outside the SF world. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, our culture seemed ready to embrace the concepts of love and the kindness of the human spirit which Sturgeon fervently believed in, and purveyed so dramatically in his fiction. Our culture, or parts of it, seemed ready to accept a Sturgeonesque worldview. I think it would have taken just one major Sturgeon SF novel in that period to have become an underground classic, and elevate Theodore Sturgeon to the status of a

cult leader, his fiction sought out by tens or hundreds of thousands of readers looking for a philosophy which integrates human love, kindness and intelligence.

But that never happened. Theodore Sturgeon's name is not now and never was a household word, as I believe it could have been. The word of Sturgeon has never really been spread to the masses. It may occur next year, or next decade, or next century, but it will not occur with Ted himself as a living, changing influence.

The appreciations of Theodore Sturgeon which have appeared in various magazines and fanzines in the SF field since his death have included numerous testimonials by people prominent in the field regarding the powerful effects their personal relationships with Sturgeon have had on their lives. The writers of those appreciations range from oldtime friends of Ted's to newer and younger authors who were touched by his warmth and kindness through only one or two meetings.

In reading those appreciations, I cannot help but feel sad. It is one of the great disappointments in my life that my only real personal meeting with Ted Sturgeon turned out badly, at least in my mind, based on my high expectations. That meeting was at the 1978 Unicon, held in Silver Spring, Maryland, at which Sturgeon was Guest of Honor.

First, I should give a little background. In 1978, I was in my second full year of trying to establish THRUST as a major science fiction review magazine. I was working with almost no money, and had only my own stubborn confidence to keep me going. I was doing almost all of the work on THRUST myself at that time, including much of the writing. One of the ways I felt I could make a name for myself in SF was as an interviewer. I was involved in the very successful Harlan Ellison interview, which was conducted at the 1974 Worldcon (Discon II), and printed in the last issue of THRUST associated with the University of Maryland, #7, which I finally produced myself in 1976 when it became clear that the issue would never otherwise see publication. When I decided to turn THRUST into a major SF semi-prozine, I conducted an interview with Ted White for that first new issue (#8) in 1977. I decided to interview Norman Spinrad for the next issue of THRUST (#9), and actually travelled all the way to Spinrad's Manhattan apartment to spend several hours interviewing him. I was



very proud of that interview, and felt it was the start of a true career for me as an interviewer. THRUST #10, the first issue of 1978, represented a brief hiatus for me as an interviewer, since old friend Dave Bischoff contributed two nice interviews with literary agents Kirby McCauley and Henry Morrison.

When I found out that the 1978 Unicon (a convention which I had helped found several years earlier while with the University of Maryland Science Fiction Society) had chosen Theodore Sturgeon as Guest of Honor, I saw it as a golden opportunity. I had admired his work for more than a decade, and would have time before the convention to reread most of his major work. I wanted to interview him desperately and I was confident that he was a kind and generous person who would find a way to avoid intimidating a young, but sincere, interviewer. (Although the Spinrad interview was my baptism of fire, interviewing a strongly opinionated author on unfamiliar turf, I was still far from confident in my own abilities, and could easily imagine becoming nervous and freezing: my mind a blank, the interview a disaster.) I also, I believe, had some vague, wild fantasies that this great and wise pundit would, by the end of the interview, recognize the spiritual and intellectual potential of this young, respectful interviewer, and utter kind words of encouragement, or, even better, find some way to acknowledge me as his potential equal.

All of these thoughts were going through my head during the months preceeding Unicon, as I prepared for the interview by reading at least a dozen books of Theodore Sturgeons fiction. It was going to be the best interview I ever had done. And this meeting with the great author could be a seminal moment in my life, a turning point towards greater accomplishments.

When the weekend of the convention finally arrived, I was unable to attend on Friday night for reason I can no longer recall, but I showed up bright and early on Saturday morning, portable tape recorder and pocket camera in hand. I immediately began searching the hallways and meeting rooms of the hotel for Sturgeon. (Why didn't I telephone Sturgeon before the con, ask him for an interview and arrange to meet him somewhere at an appointed time? Who knows? I have asked myself that very same question many times. It just didn't occur to me at the time.)

I had some trouble even finding Sturgeon that day, but I finally caught him, I believe after a panel he was on. I patiently waited for the autograph seekers and miscellaneous sycophants to thin out, by which time Sturgeon was walking down the hall. He was in constant conversation with someone, and there was no polite way to cut in for some time. Finally, just before he got away entirely, I was able to get his attention. I gave him a copy of my previous issue of THRUST (#10), and explained that I was the editor of this SF review journal, and would like to ask for just a few minutes of his time for an interview. I was immediately disappointed that he did not seem overly impressed with THRUST, or my status as editor of it. He quickly conveyed to me that he didn't have much time, was leaving in less than 24 hours, and had already promised to spend some time with another interviewer.

He must have sensed my deep disappointment, or maybe I was embarrassingly insistent. For whatever reason, he said, "Well, here is the young man I promised to meet with, possibly he wouldn't mind if you joined us." I didn't recognize the person who had already gotten to Sturgeon for an interview, nor did I recognize his name, Larry Duncan. But he agreed that it would be fine if I sat in, and I acquiesced to that compromise, seeing no way out. I then talked to Larry Duncan alone, told him my situation, and asked about his desire to interview Sturgeon. Mr. Duncan had no real plan for what to do with his interview, had never done an interview before (and to my knowledge has never done one since). On the face of it, this was good news. I easily made a tentative deal to publish whatever interview we came up with in THRUST. But for some reason, my disappointment and resentment (at no one in particular) continued to grow. After all, I, a slightly important and

up-and-coming editor/publisher/interviewer had lost out on an exclusive interview with Theodore Sturgeon to an unknown who had no idea why he wanted to interview Sturgeon, and lost out simply by being a few minutes late in approaching Mr. Sturgeon.

The actual interview took place the next day, Sunday, at about Noon in the hotel coffee shop. Far from the intimate tete-a-tete between two people I had hoped for and envisioned, there ended up being nearly a half dozen of us there with Ted Sturgeon that day, although only Larry Duncan and his friend Arthur Henderson really took part in the interview, along with myself, of course.

The results of that interview can be seen in THRUST #11, the Fall 1978 issue. The printed interview is based on the transcription provided by Larry Duncan, which I re-edited based on my recording of the interview. It is not a bad interview in fact, I think it is a very good and interesting interview with Theodore Sturgeon- if a better one has been published, I don't recall it. But it is not the interview I set out to do. I was able to interject only a handful of times, and never managed to turn the interview in the directions I wanted for very long periods. Far from experiencing the thrill of being in the presence of a great man, I was constantly frustrated with the questions of people who, it seemed to me at the time, had experienced Sturgeons work as interesting academic exercises, not as the revelations of truth and beauty and wisdom which I felt them to be.

That experience was the death knell of my career as an interviewer of SF and fantasy authors. I never even attempted another interview. There were and have been other contributing factors, of course. I hate transcribing tapes, and THRUST had become established well enough that I was getting many more good interviews submitted than I could print. And maybe someday I will begin interviewing again, or at least try an occasional interview. I still think I could do it well. Maybe even make a name for myself at it, as Charles Platt did . . .

That was all more than seven years ago, but it seems like twenty. I have learned a lot from the many disappointments in my life, both large and small. This was one of the small ones, I suppose, although it seemed very important at the time.

I still believe I could have produced a really great interview with Theodore Sturgeon. Now that possibility no longer exists. Ted Sturgeon is gone now and we have only our memories of him and his fiction. In my case, unlike so many others, my memories of him are fraught with disappointment and lost opportunity.

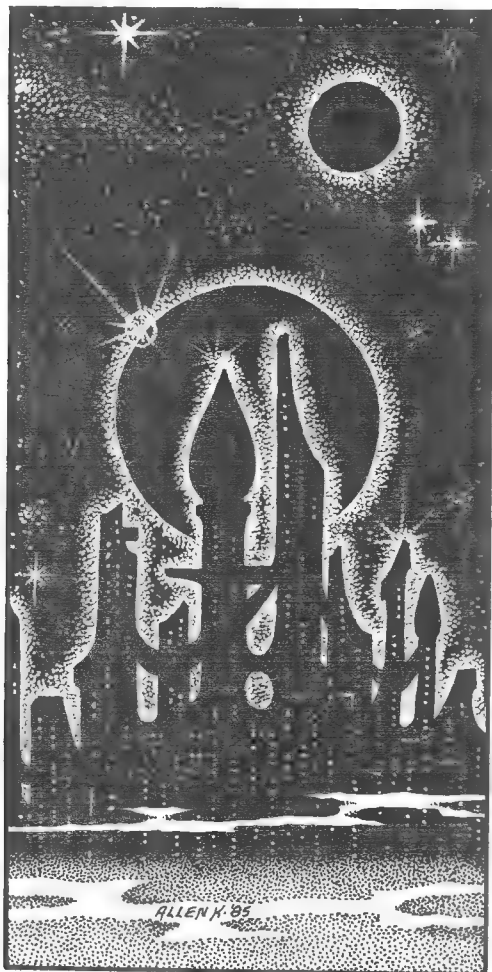
The stories Sturgeon produced will always be with me, however. For me, that will have to suffice.

Doug Fraiz



# REVIEWS —

## — books, etc.



**TERRY CARR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR**, Edited by Terry Carr (Tor Books, 1985, 384pp., \$3.50) (ISBN 0-812-53273-2)

**THE YEAR'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION: SECOND ANNUAL COLLECTION**, Edited by Gardner Dozois (Bluejay Books, 1985, 573pp., \$10.95) (ISBN 0-312-94485-3)

**THE 1985 ANNUAL WORLD'S BEST SCIENCE FICTION**, Edited by Donald A. Wollheim with Arthur W. Saha (DAW Books, 1985, 302pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-88677-047-5)

As we've come to expect of late, 1984 saw another bumper crop of outstanding short works of science fiction and fantasy. Of the three major best-of-the-year anthologies, Dozois one again wins in terms of sheer quantity of excellent work, with 26 stories chosen, while Carr and Wollheim are neck-and-neck in terms of overall quality this year with their collections of 12 and 10 best stories respectively. Once again this year, all are excellent buys, and each has top class fiction not included in either of the others.

Most of the truly excellent stories were chosen for more than one of these volumes. John Varley's "Press Enter", the run-away winner for the best novella in 1984,

was wisely chosen by all three editors. Another excellent novella, "Trinity" by Nancy Kress, was missed only by Wollheim. The two best novelettes this year, "Bloodchild" by Octavia Butler and "The Lucky Strike" by Kim Stanley Robinson were both chosen by Dozois and Carr, although Wollheim missed including Robinson's story. Michael Swanwick's fine novella, "Trojan Horse", was missed by Wollheim as well. Lucius Shepard's "Salvador", possibly the best short story this year, was passed up only by Carr.

One surprise this year is that two humorous stories were chosen as among the best-of-the-year, Connie Willis' "Blued Moon" (Dozois and Carr) and George Alec Effinger's "The Aliens Who Knew, I Mean, Everything" (Carr and Wollheim). Of the two stories, I found Willis' sophomoric and unsophisticated humor, while the Effinger satire on the obnoxious nature of those with too-strong opinions on matters of taste I found to be hilariously on the mark. It was clearly one of the best stories of the year, and one of the most humorous SF short stories of all time. Wollheim is to be commended for choosing the much better Willis story, "Cash Crop", while Dozois is to be slapped on the wrist for over-looking Effinger's gem.

Tanith Lee has the surprising distinction of having a different story in each collection. All three are good choices, with possibly the best being Carr's choice of "A Day in the Skin". Other multiple story authors are Gene Wolfe, with two good stories in the Dozois anthology, but none elsewhere, and Shepard, with his interesting story "Black Coral", picked up by Dozois along with "Salvador".

Dozois is to be commended for picking up many stories not included in the other anthologies, especially "The Kindly Isle" by Fred Pohl, one of the best and most overlooked pieces of short SF last year, and Bruce Sterling's "Sunken Gardens", one of the year's best short stories. The most pleasing aspect of the Dozois volume is that he was able to fill out this 250,000-word volume with at least a dozen first-rate, near-award-quality stories by such authors new and old as McDevitt, Cowper, Silverberg, Gibson, Dann, Lynn, Yount, Cadigan, Shiner, Kelly and Kessel.

Carr was the only editor to pick up Charles Harness' "Summer Solstice", one of the best novellas of 1984, and the unjustly overlooked "Fears" by Pamela Sargent. He also included an interesting different story by Bob Leeman, and a good-but-not-great story by Lee Montgomery.

Wollheim picked up several near-great stories ignored by the others, including "The Picture Man" by John Dalmus, "We Remember Babylon" by Ian Watson and "The Coming of the Goonga" by Gary Shockley. The only slightly weak story in Wollheim's volume is "What Makes Us Human" by Stephen R. Donaldson, which would be a truly excellent ANALOG-type story if the first ten pages or so were totally rewritten.

There were even a few very good stories last year not included in any of these best-of-the-year volumes. Most notable is "Morning Child" by Gardner Dozois, one of the editors. "A Traveller's Tale" and "The Man Who Painted the Dragon Griaule" by Shepard would both probably have been chosen if not for "Salvador". "Saint Theresa Of The Aliens" by James P. Kelly, "The Eichmann Variations" by George Zebrowski, and "Ridge Running" by Kim Stanley Robinson are also likely choices not made.

Reading each year's best-of-the-year anthologies is getting more pleasurable and rewarding each year. If you read only SF and fantasy novels, you are missing out on much of the best fiction being published in the field each year. Don't miss out on any of these volumes.

— Doug Fratz

**IN THE DRIFT** by Michael Swanwick (Ace Books, 1985, 195pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-441-35869-1)

This book is the final of a half dozen Ace Specials in which Terry Carr has published books by some of the best short SF writers of the moment, many of whom he helped uncover in the pages of his **Universe** anthology series.

That and Michael Swanwick's reputation are two reasons

to have high expectations for **In The Drift**. The book builds on "Mummer's Kiss", a novella set in a parallel future where Three Mile Island had a meltdown, forming the Drift, a huge fallout area north of Philadelphia which is shunned and feared by all "normal" people, and mutants and monsters scrape a bare livelihood from the sick earth.

Scientific verisimilitude counts for little in this story, and the political logic leading to fragmentation of the U.S. is far from clear as well. Swanwick does not spent much time rationalizing--a style characteristic of short stories--and is more interested in poignant scenes and unforgettable characters, such as "Sam", the vampire woman, and her daughter Victoria.

Successful generations carry the dramatic momentum of a book which may better be read as separate pieces of short fiction; "Mutagen Fair" would stand as a first rate horror short, for instance, but contributes little to the novel's overall plot. The only continuing character in the book is Keith Piotrowicz, who goes full circle from a dissident in "Mummer's Kiss" to a ruthless powermonger in the established power structure.

This lack of continuity in the structure is underscored rather than mended when "Marrow Death" (the fifth section) uses as an element of resolution what has already been revealed at the conclusion of "Mummer's Kiss": that Philadelphia, standing in barracaded terror at the supposed edge of the Drift, actually lies within the Drift. Thus "Marrow Death" (published on its own in ASIMOV'S) starts anew, virtually forgetting the previous material.

Disappointment with this novel can only come from the tremendous expectations created by earlier novels in the new Ace Special series; indeed, it is rather surprising, given the background of editor and authors, that this is the first "fix-up" novel in the series. As a novel, **In The Drift** does not hang together well; as a story cycle, in the manner of the **City** or **Foundation** stories, it is exceptional, displaying all of Michael Swanwick's abilities to create forceful, original images and characters.

- Pascal J. Thomas

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**MEDEA: HARLAN'S WORLD**, Edited by Harlan Ellison (Bantam Books, 1985, 532pp., \$10.95) (ISBN 0-553-34170-7)

For nearly a decade, there has been vague information within the SF field regarding a project led by Harlan Ellison to create a fictional SF world and write stories based on it. Beginning in 1978, the stories developed from this project began to appear in various sources.

Finally, this whole project and the results thereof are published in its entirety in a single volume. Included is a complete record of the creation of Medea, or Harlan's World, from the original specifications for the astrophysics, geology, biology, ecology and culture of the planet by Hal Clement, Poul Anderson, Larry Niven and Fred Pohl, to a public panel discussion of it all by Tom Disch, Frank Herbert, Bob Silberberg, Ted Sturgeon and Harlan, to comments and ideas from the audience, to second thoughts by the creating authors. I'm not sure how valuable much of this is, but it is indeed fascinating to take such a close look at the total creative package, so to speak. Ellison chose to present the transcript of the panel discussion unedited--probably a good choice, since there would be no way to edit this fairly. It is shocking to note, however, that many authors capable of writing very clear and literate prose are only able to speak and present ideas verbally in extremely unclear and illiterate prose!

There were eleven stories written based on Medea, and all are included within this volume. They run the very narrow span in quality of good to very good. There are no real award-quality stories here, but they are all worth reading. The ever-remarkable Jack Williamson manages to write a fine Jack-Williamson story, the same as he has been writing for years; "Farside Station" would have been the best SF story of 1939. Ellison himself contributes one of the most memorable stories, "With Virgil Oddum at the East

Pole". There are also very good stories by Niven, Anderson, Wilhelm, Sturgeon, Silberberg and Disch, and stories of only slightly lesser quality by Pohl, Clement, and Herbert.

This book can be recommended to all serious students of SF literature, as well as to the casual SF reader--the truth is, the fiction in this volume is more easily read and enjoy together than as separate stories.

- Doug Fratz

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**FIVE TWELFTHS OF HEAVEN** by Melissa Scott (Baen Books, 1985, 339pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-671-55952-4)

Melissa Scott's latest novel tells the story of starship pilot Silence Liegh, a rare female pilot in a universe where women are treated as second-class citizens. She dreams of getting her own starship and independence. In her quest for a ship, she fights, commits piracy, is enslaved, marries two men at once, and attempts to discover the extent of her pilot's mental powers. In this far-distant future there are scores of populated worlds, and science and technology has been largely replaced by magic and mental powers. The starships sail the stars by magic, visions and the music of the spheres.

There are some good basic ideas in this novel--star pirates, magic-based technology, starships sailing through dreamscapes, the struggle of oppressed women to achieve equality--but their use in this novel leaves much to be desired. There is insufficient explanation of the magic's origins or uses for an SF novel. There are numerous mental lapses, unanswered questions, and questionable assumptions: machines are all but eliminated, yet appear when convenient; the secrets of magicians and starpilots are closely guarded, but is this realistic in a multi-planet society? Is it believable that women are oppressed throughout the inhabited universe, except for the obligatory all-women planet? Would not rebels and pirates favor sexual equality to expand their forces? In a society where knowledge is such a valuable commodity, why don't the pirates deal in black-market books or other illegal information? One keeps hoping for answers in this novel, but the story's holes are left gaping.

Character development is also shallow, with little growth shown. The two male lead characters are partially defined, and then forgotten until needed. New characters are introduced near the end who either serve no function at all or simply are handy to perform some function. There is much musing, grimacing, and the like, and all the characters are conveniently adept at interpreting meaning-laden looks. Though women are supposed to be oppressed, and the characters complain about the treatment of women, there is little evidence of repression. Silence Liegh goes about as she pleases, seeming more sullen than feminist, worried about herself rather than women in general.

Scott's story contains too many things seemingly designed to make things easy for her. Too many things happen "as if he could read her mind." The plot progresses by luck and coincidence. Silence desires a spaceship early in the book, and one is conveniently thrown into her lap at the end, but her desire plays no part in the rest of the book. Even the names are annoying: the planets have unpronounceable names, while "Silence" is annoying primarily because people are constantly shouting out her name, seemingly calling out for quiet. The interstellar flight scenes have some nice moments, but the characters return to the mundane universe and one again begin to gasp, growl and cast meaningful glances.

This book may be the opening of a major story. Possibly Silence will lead a rebellion to spread the knowledge of magic and better the lot of women in a future book. But after 300 pages, the book just ends, without any indication whether the story is to continue.

Perhaps I am making this novel sound worse than it really is, but I found it to be pointless and tiresome.

- Terry H Jones



**THE WINDRIDER** by Stephanie T. Hoppe (DAW Books, 1985, 253pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-88677-020-3)

The *Windrider* is a traditional tale of political intrigue and adventure in which Oa, the heir apparent of the ruling Dynast of the Gandish Empire, discovers that the web of politics has trapped her in a terrible choice: kill her true love, Jilly, in the ritual of the High Dance, or give up her claim to the throne.

Oa steals a boat and drifts out to sea where a storm catches her. The boat is wrecked, and Oa is washed up on a strange shore. There she is taken in by a village which is dominated by the "windriders" who ride horse-like creatures called "windsteeds." Oa eventually comes to master a windsteed and dominate the windriders, and finally to lead them in the conquest of her rightful empire.

The *Windrider* is part of a growing body of lesbian protagonist novels in the science fiction/fantasy field. In the early days of feminist SF, many authors, including the brilliant SF literati Joanna Russ, seemed to strain in their efforts to establish the naturalness and legitimacy of a single-sex romantic situation. But starting with the remarkable novels of Elizabeth A. Lynn (her *Chronicles of Tormor* especially) lesbian and homosexual relationships and bisexual liaisons have been depicted with a quiet, non-politicized manner that suggested the author was completely comfortable with her subject matter and felt no need to justify or explain or defend it in any way. Hoppe's depiction of her lesbian heroine's sexual preferences achieves a pinnacle of nonchalance, and insinuates itself into the narrative with nary a pause for elaboration. In this I found it refreshing.

Stylistically, *Windrider* is a close cousin to the novels of Anne McCaffrey, and this extends to Hoppe's characterizations as well. This book is easy to read and enjoyable, and avoids great attempts at profundity.

- Janrae Frank

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**BRIGHTNESS FALLS FROM THE AIR** by James Tiptree, Jr. (Tor Books, 1985, 270pp., \$14.95; Science Fiction Book Club)

Alice Sheldon, writing under her male pseudonym, James Tiptree, Jr., has written a second novel which is one of the finest science fiction novels thus far in 1985, and may be expected to be a prime candidate for next year's major awards. Tiptree's first novel, *Up the Walls of the World*, was published in 1978, and although it was a well-done and ambitious novel of alien intelligence, it failed to gain the notice I believe that it deserved in the SF review press, even though it did get a Hugo nomination. One can only hope that that lack is not repeated for *Brightness Falls From the Air*.

This is a beautiful and equally ambitious novel which fully succeeds on a number of levels. It takes place on the spectacular backdrop of the planet Damien, home planet of the Dameii, during the passing of a wave-front from a nearby supernova. It features the tragic alien race of the Dameii, and the tragic story of their exploitation by humans, as well as an interesting cast of human characters made up of the official protectors of the Dameii and a diverse group of tourists there to see rare auroral display. It also contains enough fascinating hard science and glimpses of future culture to please even the most jaded SF fan. The book succeeds equally well as a murder mystery, novel of suspense and intrigue, and a hard SF sense-of-wonder story.

This is one of the SF novels not to miss this year. If you can't afford the Tor hardcover, and can't wait for the paperback edition (sure to be out by early next year when award nominees are chosen), you can try to get the Book Club edition.

- Doug Fratz

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**CHAPTERHOUSE: DUNE** by Frank Herbert (Putnam, 1985 464pp., \$17.95) (ISBN 0-399-13027-6)

I marveled at *Dune*, stumbled through *Dune Messiah* and *Children of Dune*, tried to forget *God-Emperor of Dune*, and smiled after *Heretics of Dune*. The sixth book in this epic series, *Chapterhouse: Dune*, improves on the fifth, and even approaches the first. The reason for this improvement is simplification.

The plot, motivations and thematic content of this novel are as complex as ever, but they are now comprehensible. The *Dune* series was becoming mired in nebulous philosophy, reaching its nadir in *God-Emperor*. Complex philosophical speculations have their place in SF, but when overdone it leads to pseudo-mysticism. A reader can get the impression that an author is trying to confuse him or her into believing the author has insights of cosmic significance. *Heretics* began to reverse that trend in the *Dune* series, and *Chapterhouse* effectively completes that reversal.

*Chapterhouse* is indeed understandable. The Bene Gesserit views on the fallacies of historical perspective, government, and traditional social and power structures, and the necessities of basic freedom, logic, humanity and natural balance, are made clear. It is also clear that Herbert is sympathetic to the Bene Gesserit, and that these appear to be his views being presented.

In this novel, *Dune* is gone, the Tleilaxu are gone, and the Honored Matres (perversions of Reverend Mothers lacking Other Memory-born insight) seek to destroy the Bene Gesserit, who are centered on the hidden planet Chapterhouse, which is evolving to become a new *Dune*. Wild cards in the game include: Sheeana, potential focus for a religious crusade; the child ghola of Bashar Teg; Scytale, the last Tleilaxu Master; the Duncan Idaho ghola from *Heretics*; and captured Honored Matre Murbella. Herbert's denouement, though thematically consistent, seems abrupt and contrived, almost a *deus ex machina*.

Nevertheless, *Chapterhouse: Dune* is well-plotted, thought-provoking and exciting. Even though the planet *Dune* is not featured, and with it goes some of the diversity and grandeur of the previous novels, the ecological themes are still strong. One wonders how Herbert will manage to incorporate the word "Dune" into the title of the next novel in the series--the ending of this novels makes it apparent there will be at least one more.

*Chapterhouse: Dune* is not *Dune*, but it is Herbert's best since *Dune*.

- Eugene Lin

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**TALES BY MOONLIGHT**, edited by Jessica Amanda Salmonson (Tor Books, 1985, 286pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-812-52552-3)

This collection of short stories from the darker side of fantasy is primarily a celebration of the work of a number of new or lesser-known writers. Most of the entries in this book are effective in sending a chill up the spine. The most notable stories in this regard include Dale C. Donaldson's "Nocturnal Visitor," Jeffrey Lant's "Flames," Janet Fox's "Witches," Gordon Linzner's "Jaborandi Jazz," Elinor Busby's "Night of the Red, Red Moon," and Linda Thornton's "Inhabitant of the Pond."

The two attempts at seeing horror from a child's point of view, that is a childhood fantasy becoming reality, were rather weak and ineffective. Phyllis Ann Karr's entries were more in the "sword and sorcery" fantasy tradition and, although they provided a breathing space between chills, seemed out of place.

The lycanthropic "A Night Out" by Nina Kiriki Hoffman, however, is a jewel; werewolf tales are often capable of making one want to stay home during a full moon. But there is no excuse for the William H. Green entry, "Dog Killer." Rather than being a horror story, it was an abomination of animal cruelty. It may be one of the most tasteless stories ever to appear in print.

The book features an introduction by Stephen King, and with just a few exceptions, *Tales By Moonlight* is a good

book to curl up with on a stormy night.

- Debra L. McBride

**TOM O'BEDLAM** by Robert Silverberg (Donald I. Fine, 1985, 320pp., \$16.95) (ISBN 0-917657-31-4)

Transferring human misery into simple unhappiness-- This Freudian statement resounds throughout the latest Silverberg novel, **Tom O'Bedlam**, based on the song of the same title.

Silverberg explores a 22nd Century Earth which is morally dissolved by nuclear war, spiritually ruined by brass post-industrial technology, and despairing in the ruins. Tom O'Bedlam, ceaseless wanderer, has special powers that enable him to see beyond the horrors of his alienated world.

This novel is not starkly original. But by this time in his swashbuckling career, Silverberg can take the downed-hero theme and explore it in new ways. Tom's powers enable him to leap to "shimmering green" distant worlds, and in doing so he gives direction to the distraught peoples of Earth.

There is a wealth of despondency, which Silverberg seems to revel in. The novel mirrors Kafka, being both sorrowful and uplifting. It does a great deal with very little, and is worth every minute of your time.

- Andrew M. Andrews

**SLEEPLESS NIGHTS IN THE PROCRUSTEAN BED** by Harlan Ellison, edited by Marty Clark (Borgo Press, 1984, 192pp., \$7.95 (paper), \$14.95 (cloth.)) (ISBN 0-89370-270-6)

Harlan Ellison is so good at what he does that it sometimes seems that the only excuse for the rest of us to keep writing is that he cannot write enough to fill all the blank pages in the world. I love Ellison's fiction, especially the ferocious, energetic stories in **The Beast That Shouted Love at the Heart of the World**, **Deathbird Stories**, and **Strange Wine**. But I also relish his long, rambling introductions and story notes. Some fans evidently dislike these ancillary pieces, feeling that they sully the purity of his fiction. I can't agree.

Ellison's fiction is so good that even serious readers tend to overlook Ellison's skills as an essayist. Such previous volumes as his collected television criticism, **The Glass Teat** and **The Other Glass Teat**, show that he is as skilled a craftsman with the English language as George Orwell, as muscular and vibrant a writer as Norman Mailer, as perceptive and acute an observer as Gore Vidal, and as vivid, funny and provocative as Hunter Thompson or Tom Wolfe. (Anyone who wants to evaluate these claims first-hand should dig up and read copies of **A Collection of Essays** by George Orwell, Mailer's **Advertisements for Myself**, Vidal's **Matters of Fact and Fiction**, Thompson's **The Great Shark Hunt**, and Wolfe's **The Purple Decades**.) Not that Ellison writes like any of these writers--his is the voice of a true original.

At long last someone--Marty Clark and Borgo Press--has taken pity on us Ellison-essay-fans and given us a bouquet of his best pieces under the euphonious title, **Sleepless Nights in the Procrustean Bed**. Hard-core Ellisonophiles will already have read at least a third of this collection, which includes essays on himself and Bob Silberberg from **FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION** and **THE BEST OF ONMI** NO. 5, the introduction to **Strange Wine** (a blistering diatribe on television and "the death of reading"), and his angry SFWA resignation speech from **ALGOL**. Even these well-known reprinted essays are worth rereading. And there are also less familiar essays on television and SF, a paean to Los Angeles, a deeply-felt memoir of the 1965 march on Montgomery, a short indictment of the insidious effect of "Sisyphean" video games, and a report on videotape dating that becomes an intimate rumination on "true love." All these and more, all filtered through the highly subjective

Ellisonian vision.

It is that vision and Ellison's unique, kaleidoscopic style that unifies these disparate ramblings and elevates them to the level of art. Whether eulogizing his mother, excoriating the SFWA for their antedeluvian attitudes towards Hollywood, or railing at Ronald Reagan and the hypocritical opponents of gun control, Ellison is consistently and fiercely himself. Very few essayists--in or outside of SF--are as open and honest; of you want to know what Ellison is really like, settle down for an evening or two with this book.

You may have to go to a little bit of trouble to get this book, however. Borgo Books are not available at most bookstores, although you may find this book sold by many specialty SF bookstores and at conventions. Luckily, the book is also available directly from Borgo Press, Box 2845, San Bernardino, CA 92406. This eclectic sampler of funny, moving, corruscating writing is as stimulating a volume of essays as you are likely to find this year.

- Michael A. Morrison

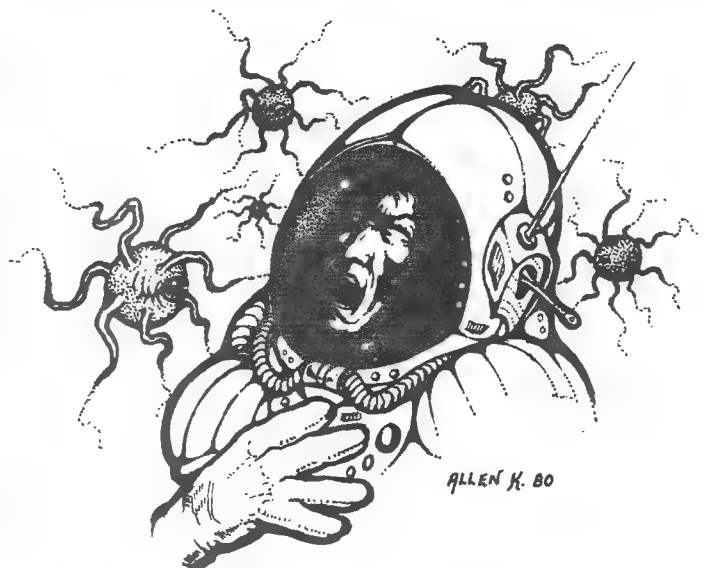
**EMPRISE** by Michael P. Kube-McDowell (Berkley, 1985, 304pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-425-07763-2)

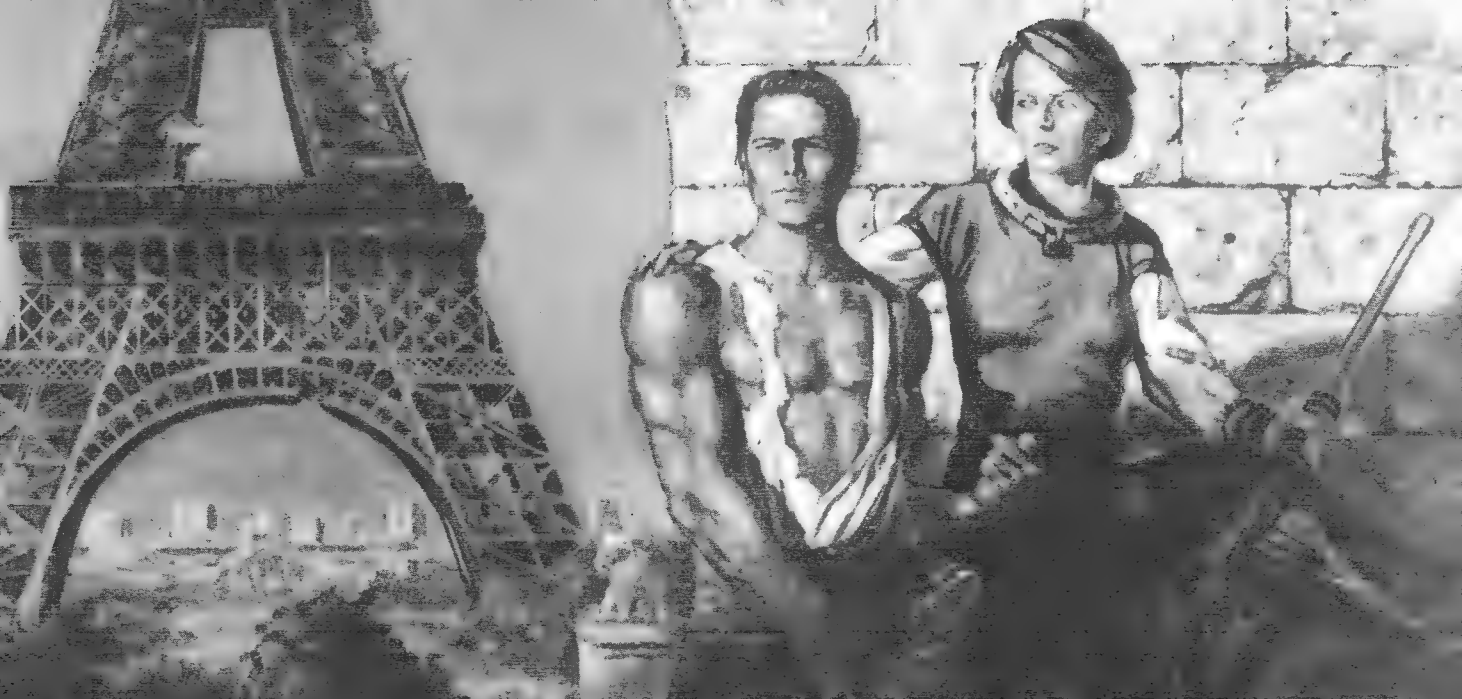
It is early in the 21st century and most people blame science and scientists for the world's ills. Scientific research is almost entirely banned and scientists commonly killed. But despite the growing anarchy and misplaced hate, the science of astronomy continues through amateurs, former scientists studying in secret.

Such is the backdrop of this deliberating, excellent first novel. While the Food and Fuel Wars continue unabated, Idaho astronomer Allen Chandliss hears the signs on his radio telescope that indicate life out among the stars. The aliens will arrive soon--will Earth be ready?

Kube-McDowell takes great pains to examine the sociological texture of Earth's societies, and their reactions to this message of greetings from the stars. King William oversees the establishment of the Pangaeian Consortium, a united scientists league, to help establish eventual contact with the aliens. The rest of the novel deals primarily with the struggles of this consortium to convince enough of the world of the importance of the upcoming First Contact.

One must have patience with this novel, which is labeled as "Book One of the Trigon Disunity," as it delves deeply into the political and social ramifications of the first meeting between human and non-human intelligence. While some of the dialog is slow and unspectacular, the drama is enduring.





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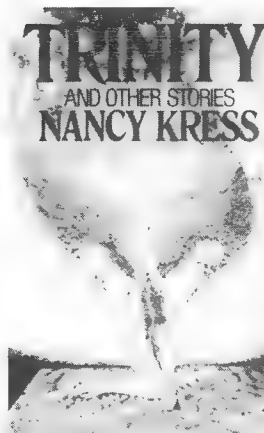
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This is a fine first novel from one of the field's most promising young writers.

- Andrew M. Andrews

**L. RON HUBBARD PRESENTS WRITERS OF THE FUTURE**, Edited by **Algis Budrys** (Bridge Publications, 1985, 356 pp., \$3.95) (ISBN 0-88404-170-0)

This volume is the result of the Hubbard-sponsored Writers of the Future Contest, and contains some of the first year's entries in that contest. Judges in the contest are well known and respected writers like Benford, Silverberg, Sturgeon, Goldin, Williamson, Moore and Zelazny, as well as Algis Budrys, who edited this volume. Given enough money, it is possible to buy highly respected names in the field. It is much more difficult to find excellent fiction by new, inexperienced writers.

The fiction in this volume is neither as good as one could hope, given the stellar line-up of judges, nor as bad as one would expect from a volume limited to new, unknown SF and fantasy writers. There are indeed a few very good stories here among the usual minor and marginal first stories.

The volume begins with a weak story by Michael Miller, whose attempt at a powerful story fails because it doesn't make enough sense to work as SF. Nina Hoffman's similar story follows, and is much more successful because it is written as fantasy, and makes no annoying pretenses of being science fiction. Jor Jennings contributes one of the best stories in the volume, "Tiger Hunt," which is an extremely powerful story which needs only minor editing to be award-quality--as it is, the story is marred by characters who make up their minds on complex issues illogically, and unnecessarily, fast.

A. J. Mayhew contributes a pleasing, competent vignette, while Dennis J. Pimple's ho-hum pinball-with-the-devil story fails to justify its choice as the first place winner of the first quarter. Karen Joy Fowler's rather good story of a cloned nurse with a defect, told first person by the nurse, is more successful and interesting. Leonard Carpenter contributes a long story I found to be mystical bullshit, while Norma Hutman's Brothers-Grimm-style fairy tale is not bad, and recommended for fans of that form. Randall Crump writes a very good story about life, death and human emotions, which is neither SF nor fantasy. Victor Rosemund contributes a gritty tale of supernatural vengeance on a truly evil protagonist, while L. E. Carroll's is a cute but minor deal-with-the-devil story. And Dean Wesley Smith's contribution is a standard old-folks-are-only-as-old-as-they-feel story.

Three of the better stories in the volume appeal near the end of the book. David Zindell writes a brilliant far-future tale, probably the best in the book, making him a new writer to watch. Michael Green contributes a quite imaginative and well-written story of alien eggs appearing. The last story in the book is a nicely done SF story by Mary Frances Zambreno that has a sort of fairy tale quality.

The volume also contains introductions by Budrys (the first about Hubbard, in which Algis fails in his attempt not to overestimate Hubbard's importance to the history of SF), and short and occasionally inspiring essays by Silverberg, Sturgeon, Williamson and Zelazny.

Unless your aim is to see what type of stories are winning this continuing short fiction contest with the goal of submitting fiction yourself, I can't recommend reading this whole anthology; there are so many books of higher quality short fiction to choose from. But some of these stories are worth reading, and at least Jennings and Zindell are writers who could go on to great things.

- Doug Fratz

**THE COPPER CROWN** by **Patricia Kennealy** (Bluejay Books, 1984, 329 pp., \$15.95) (ISBN 0-312-94062-9)

In **The Copper Crown**, Patricia Kennealy effectively blends the distant past and the distant future in a way that is richly vibrant, and creates a minor masterpiece of SF/fantasy literature.

There's an old Irish Legend that states that the mythical race, the Tuatha de Danaan, disappeared in "ships" to the stars when Saint Patrick converted the Emerald Isle to Christianity. Kennealy assumes those ships were in fact starships, and the Tuatha de Danaan escaped to a distant planetary system.

In **The Copper Crown**, Earth's future space explorers come into contact with the descendants of the Tuatha on their planet, Keltia. Aeron, Queen of Keltia, decides to greet the Terrans with open arms, even though in doing so she knows Keltia's enemies, the Imperium and the Phalanx, will combine to destroy Keltia before Earth and Keltia can combine forces to attack them.

This novel is undoubtedly the first book of a new series. This book begins the epic with the new alliance between Earth and Keltia and the first of the battles for supremacy in that sector of space. For Keltia, however, it is a struggle for the survival of their Celtic race.

Kennealy draws on the Arthurian legends as well as Irish history in this saga, and blends sorcery and technology in a way that both believable and intriguing. I ended this book wanting more, disappointed to have to wait for the sequel to be published.

- Debra L. McBride

## Letters cont. from pg. 34

things Hugos, and, although he's my dearest friend, he's wrong there. The story behind the idea of reviving the awards is interesting in itself, but too long to go into here, but we never dreamed we never dreamed we were starting an **institution!**

[If I remember right, the logic for making Jupiter into a star was that the seeded life on Jupiter's moon needed to evolve many years without being near a star, then enter its next evolutionary step under much warmer conditions. As for the gravitational effects of making Jupiter a sun, it probably required an increase

in mass of a factor of at least ten to make a nice star (that is assuming that the aliens don't know how to make stable smaller stars, something we can't rule out). That increase would have some nasty side-effects on Jupiter's inner moons, and probably have some longterm effects on the whole solar system, but probably nothing very fast. Jupiter is a **long** way away from the inner solar system, and Saturn a long way from Jupiter. Clarke probably had an astrophysicist do some calculations, or did them himself... Thanks for the clarification on the 1953 awards. I was relying on DeVore's book on the subject, as I think most of us do these days. And incidentally, Noreen, if you ever do decide to write up the story behind the revival of the awards in 1955, I hope you will keep **THRUST** in mind--I would love to publish that story written by someone who was there.

-DDF]

# Counter-Thrusts



## LETTERS

Douglas Barbour  
10808 - 75 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T6E 1K2 CANADA

THRUST #22 was a good issue. I always enjoy Michael Bishop, and both his tale of editing woes and the original piece on Golding contain his usual mix of intellect and irony. It's good to hear that Golding is less of a pessimist than he used to be, but we must recall that it was the pessimist who wrote that very funny piece, "Envoy Extraordinary."

I thought Janrae Frank's essay on Phyllis Ann Karr's work was interesting; it made me want to read the books. Still, I felt she was being a bit hard on works like *The Female Man* in characterizing them as utterly anti-male and even misanthropic. After all, *The Female Man* is also a very witty, even funny, book, and a lot of what it attacks exists. It is bitter at times, yes, but that is another kettle of fish.

It is interesting to see Philip Jose Farmer suggesting that in the rush for visual hyperbole in SF films, setting, characterization, and plot become secondary, for that is really the great problem with the movie of *Dune*, reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer in the same issue. I suspect that the only way to do justice to *Dune* would be to do it on the small screen as a rather lengthy mini-series, in which all the wonderful plotting and counter-plotting could be dwelt on at length, in the manner of, say, *I, Claudius*. Nevertheless, although Darrell's criticisms are correct as far as they go, I feel that he missed a major point about the film, and one that perfectly reveals director Lynch's abysmal lack of understanding of SF at its best, and of Herbert's political and

religious skepticism in the original text. As Brian Aldiss has pointed out, one of the problems with SF is that in its most conventional forms, it is simply a "power fantasy." One of the reasons that *Dune* remains a powerful novel despite its very real flaws is that in it Herbert both exploits and interrogates the power fantasy that lies at the heart of so much "epic" SF. Paul Atreides **fails** in what appears to be his very success, and in that failure lies the seed of all the later novels. In the film, the ending so utterly **betrays** Herbert's sobering, querulous vision, I left the theatre not only saddened by the failure of the film to recreate the novel, but actually angry at Lynch for giving us the very fascist, god-worshiping finale which Herbert so carefully refused, and whose possibilities he held up to the most rigorous questioning. Also, I can't help admitting that what I really wanted to see were ornithopters, and the buggers didn't even attempt them.

I would still argue that, contra Al Sarrantonio's apparent point, a love of words is primary, or at least just as important as love of life for a writer. But I suspect the two go together. To finally be a really great writer (whatever we mean by that term now), however, you have to love the language, too. As Samuel R. Delany does, and he is only writing the finest SF and fantasy around these days.

Darrell Schweitzer  
113 Deepdale Road  
Strafford, PA 19087

I confess that I haven't read Phyllis Ann Karr's Frostfire books, but the one thought that came to me while

reading Janrae Frank's article was this: how do they keep the population up? In a primitive society where women do all the fighting, and most of the men are expendable, how is the population maintained? Unless there is a radical shift in the normal male-to-female proportion in births, there just **aren't** that many throwaway women. This, of course, is why no such Amazonian societies have ever existed. They are poor reproductive strategy.

Before feminist fantasy writers get into arcane arguments over what is the doctrinally correct way to deal with men and children in a sword and sorcery novel, I would like to see a feminist fantasy which takes into account the basic facts of life for pre-modern societies. These books as we now have them are presumably written by women who are adequately fed and clothed, who know about sanitation, and who have access to hospitals if they need them. Further, I bet that most of them come from families in which all children survived to adulthood, and the parents survived to be grandparents. We take too much for granted. It wasn't always like that. In fact, it wasn't like that at all until the middle of the 19th century. I've heard an estimate that in Elizabethan England only 10% of girls lived beyond age 20, while a full third of the boys did. This estimate is based on baptismal and death records, and may be pessimistic, but the basic story is clear.

In the course of writing my in-progress novel, *The Dream of Hecate*, I have had to do some research into the family tree of the late Roman emperor Theodosius the Great. Now Roman emperors had the very real advantages of sanitation and good food which were not available to the poor people of the time (late 4th century A.D.). Theodosius had one wife, Aelia Flacilla, by whom he had two sons, Honorius and Arcadius (both of whom later became spectacularly inept rulers), and then Aelia died giving birth to a daughter, who died at childbirth or shortly thereafter. His second wife, Galla, had two sons who died in infancy, and a daughter who lived, Galla Placidia (who is the heroine of my book). His second wife then also died in childbirth.

So Emperor Theodosius, by the standards of that time, did quite well. Two wives died, but he got three surviving children. Galla Placidia only broke even--she had two children, only one of whom survived, but then she herself lived to the ripe old age of 62. It is no wonder that so many women of that time devoted themselves to spotless Christian virginity--it increased their life expectancies enormously!

If we are dealing not with im-

perial families but with peasants in squalid hovels, it's probably necessary to keep virtually all women of childbearing age pregnant at all times. I don't know why human reproduction is so much more chancy than in other species, but nature knows no ideologies.

There have been societies in which women fought wars. The Amazon river is so named because the women of tribes in that region fought along with their men. Lombard women supposedly tied their braids under their chins so they could pass for men in battle. Some ancient writer remarked that a Gaul was twice as terrible in battle if he brought his wife along. (I think she was mostly in the cheering section, though.) But women in these cases were mostly the reserves, to be used in an emergency. The standard feminist sword and sorcery society, where women are the preferred fighters, would rapidly die out from a combination of women dying in childbirth and battle casualties. That is why in low-technology societies men do the fighting and women do the hard part.

Regarding Parke Godwin's comments on Walter Tevis, I suspect that the reason that Tevis isn't widely

regarded as a great SF writer is because he did too much mainstream work, which is invisible to the SF audience, and even most SF critics. Therefore Tevis was seen as a writer of a few early stories and **The Man Who Fell to Earth** who vanished for a long time before returning in the last few years of his life with **Mockingbird** and **Steps to the Sun**. He wasn't well-established at the beginning and he failed to re-establish himself. It takes continual presence to get noticed. The movie of **The Man Who Fell to Earth** also probably did him great damage. I'm sure a lot of people who didn't read the book decided not to give him a chance. A famous writer can survive bad movies being made from his books (witness Stephen King with **Firestarter**, **Children of the Corn**, **The Shining**, etc.), but a marginal one can't.

**Noreen Shaw**  
4441 Stern Avenue  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423

The film of 2010 wasn't as bad as I had feared. Larry said that the only reason the novel existed was because Scott was able to get a million dol-

lars for it, not because Clarke had anything more to say. What bothered me about the ending was the illogic of it. With trillions of stars in the universe, why create a new one? I also wonder if converting Jupiter into a star wouldn't have some gravitational effect on the rest of the solar system?

An error in fact appeared in the Farmer piece, which says that he received a Hugo Award for Best New Writer at Philcon in 1953. Although Philcon gave something called a science fiction achievement award in 1953, it wasn't a Hugo and didn't resemble one. The first Hugos were given at Clevecon in 1955, which I co-chaired. The idea of an award was revived by the Cleveland committee, and named by them. We tossed around lots of ideas, like Verne, Wells, even Burroughs, but we finally settled on Hugos as short, catchy and appropriate. It happened right in my living room!

So the thing Farmer got in 1953 was another thing entirely. It may be a minor point in fan history, but it matters to the participants. I note that Howard DeVore's book on the Hugos and Nebulas calls the 1953

.....Cont. on page 32

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